



# Extensive Swedish and European initiatives in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine

At a press conference on Wednesday 13 April, Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren and Minister for Public Administration Ida Karkiainen reported on the Government's overall efforts in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Government's efforts cover three areas: sanctions against Russia, support to Ukraine and a stronger Sweden.

Sweden and the EU have undertaken extensive efforts in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Sweden's Government is pushing for additional sanctions against Russia and has decided on both military and humanitarian support to Ukraine, along with historic initiatives to strengthen Swedish civil and military defence.

## **Sanctions against Russia**

The EU has thus far adopted five sanctions packages against Russia. These sanctions include freezing Russian state assets in the EU and the exclusion of major Russian banks from payment systems. Sanctions targeting specific sectors of Russia's economy have also been imposed. The latest sanctions package includes sanctions against additional banks and individuals with ties to Russian government officials, and a ban on Russian coal.

“The Government is pushing for additional and harsher sanctions against Russia. We want to see a ban on imports of Russian oil, but it is important that they be imposed by a unified EU so that the sanctions have an impact,” said Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren at the press conference.

## **Support to Ukraine**

Sweden was already one of the largest aid donors to Ukraine prior to war. Since the invasion, Sweden has decided to provide military and humanitarian support to Ukraine in excess of SEK 1.8 billion. The EU has also substantially increased its support, with a package amounting to EUR 2.7 billion. Together with Poland, Sweden is now working to organise a donor conference for Ukraine in May.

### **A stronger Sweden**

Initiatives to strengthen Sweden centre around a historic investment in military and civil defence, the economy, food security, energy and migration issues.

To address the ongoing refugee crisis, which is the largest in Europe since the Second World War, the Government has presented a number of proposed measures to secure the orderly reception of refugees from Ukraine. To support the municipalities in this work, SEK 500 million have been allocated in the form of a temporary grant.

“Sweden will assume its responsibility but expects other countries in the EU to do the same. The Government also expects all municipalities in Sweden to contribute, with a much more even distribution of refugees between municipalities than during the 2015 refugee crisis,” says Minister for Public Administration Ida Karkiainen.

The Government has also adopted measures to address price increases and mitigate the effects on Swedish businesses and households, such as temporarily reduced fuel tax, an extension of compensatory payments for electricity in southern and central Sweden, and measures to accelerate the transition to fossil-free fuels. In the Spring Amending Budget for 2022, the Government also presents a support package of SEK 1 billion to maintain Swedish food security.

### **County administrative board status reports**

On 10 March 2022, the Government instructed the country administrative boards to present regular status reports to the Government Offices. These status reports are based on contacts with all the municipalities and regions throughout the country.

“The current overall assessment is that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is having a moderate impact on Swedish society as a whole,” says Ms Karkiainen.

The latest status report, received on 12 April, indicates that there is still major need for information and cooperation, even if a number of counties report lower intensity in developments. Challenges regarding the reception of unaccompanied minors were also raised.

Finally, the county administrative boards also see an increasing impact on the business sector, where prices for fuel, energy, feedstuffs and building materials are having major consequences in certain sectors.

### **Strong EU unity**

International and European cooperation has been intensive since the invasion of Ukraine. Some 30 or so Council meetings have been held in the EU, and the European Council plans to hold an extra summit on 30–31 May.

“This horrific war is among the worst in Europe since the Second World War. It has torn up the European security order that every leader in our part of the world has backed, in Helsinki in 1975 and in Paris in 1990. At the same time, this has brought about exceptionally strong unity in European cooperation that we now see. Approval of the sanctions against Russia and support to Ukraine have been enormous. I hope, and believe, that we will also continue to see such unity going forward,” says Mr Dahlgren.

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# Efforts to bolster EU energy security need to intensify

The Government considers that concrete changes need to be made to the European energy supply. EU Member States need to reduce their dependence on Russian energy. This was conveyed by Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren and Minister for Energy and Digital Development Khashayar Farmanbar at a press briefing.

In light of the serious security situation, Mr Dahlgren and Mr Farmanbar held a press briefing on Sunday regarding the energy security situation in the EU.

“The security situation clearly shows that we need a more secure and sustainable energy supply in Europe. It’s time to intensify efforts to strengthen the EU’s energy security,” said Mr Dahlgren.

The Swedish Government takes the position that the EU should not be dependent on a few external suppliers to manage its energy supply. In the long term, the EU should, to a large extent, supply its own energy.

Sweden already has a low dependence on imported nuclear fuel, oil and gas from Russia. By contrast, large parts of Europe are highly dependent on Russian energy imports. The consequences of this dependence are now showing on the energy markets, and in Sweden in the form of increased energy prices.

“The Government wants to see two concrete changes to the European energy supply. Firstly, the EU needs to stop depending on Russian gas. Secondly, the EU Member States need to stop importing nuclear fuel from Russia. I believe there is a broad consensus in the EU that it’s not sustainable to depend on Russia for our energy supply. Given the current situation, it’s more important than ever to increase our own production of renewable energy to accelerate the transition and break the dependence on imported

energy,” said Mr Farmanbar.

About two per cent of the total Swedish energy supply consists of natural gas, and an estimated half of this come from Russia. However, several EU countries are dependent on Russian gas to manage their energy supply.

“That’s unsustainable from both a security and a climate perspective. The shift away from Russian gas will not happen overnight, and the entire EU needs to help with these efforts,” stated Mr Farmanbar.

At the press briefing, Mr Dahlgren also presented a third initiative.

“Climate transition must be accelerated. We must replace our dependence on fossil fuels – not just Russian gas – with fossil-free alternatives. Making the EU self-sufficient in energy would be a very important reform, in terms of both energy policy and security policy. We need to do this to improve both our climate and our security,” concluded Mr Dahlgren.

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# Hans Dahlgren: “Tougher sanctions and even greater support are what’s needed now”

Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren today presented six areas in which Sweden is pushing for the EU to take further decisions in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. These would entail additional and tougher sanctions against the Russian leadership and increased direct support to Ukraine.

The Government is working intensively to ensure that the EU takes new measures in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. At a press briefing on Tuesday 1 March, Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren presented six areas in which Sweden wants the EU to take joint decisions without delay.

“Europe is in an extraordinary situation that requires extraordinary measures. So far, the EU’s response to Russia’s aggression has been powerful and united. Historic, large-scale sanctions have been imposed and now both financial support and defence materiel are being provided to Ukraine. But even more is needed,” says Mr Dahlgren.

In the EU, Sweden is now pushing for the following six measures:

1. Tougher and broader sanctions against Russia’s top leaders. This would include sanctions targeting even more oligarchs who prop up Putin’s regime, and even more people with ties to the ‘Wagner Group’, a Russian mercenary organisation that commits violations and abuses in conflicts around the world.
2. The sale of EU passports to Russian citizens must stop. These so-called golden passports enable Russian oligarchs to become citizens of, and gain access to, the European Union from certain Member States.

3. A joint EU position on excluding all elite athletes from the Russian Federation from all international exchanges.
4. Long-term support to Ukraine to strengthen the country over time. The Government therefore wants the EU to reprioritise existing funds in the EU budget to increase support to Ukraine.
5. Isolate Russia further by restricting its participation in international organisations as done, for example, by the Council of Europe. The EU should now move forward and take another look at what can be done to further isolate Russia within international organisations. A similar inventory will also be taken in Sweden.
6. Initiate investigations into the very serious reports now emerging from Ukraine of widespread violations of international law. The Government will initiate the establishment of an international mechanism to collect facts and investigate alleged crimes so that those responsible can be held accountable.

At the press briefing, Mr Dahlgren emphasised the importance of the EU as Sweden's most important arena for foreign and security policy cooperation. The scale of sanctions so far adopted by both Sweden and the EU is historic.

“Russia's brutal war of aggression against Ukraine is a new dark chapter in the history of Europe. But the attack on Ukraine has clearly demonstrated the unity of the EU's 27 Member States against Russian aggression and for solidarity with the Ukrainian people. Now is the time for even tougher sanctions and even greater support,” said Mr Dahlgren.

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# Priority policy areas in Statement of Government EU Policy

On Wednesday 26 January, Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren presented the 2022 Statement of Government Policy in the Parliamentary Debate on EU Policy. The Statement, outlining how work on the Government's priorities will be pursued at EU level, was followed by a debate on EU policy in the Riksdag.

[Statement of Government Policy in the Parliamentary Debate on EU Policy, 2022](#)

In this year's Statement of Government EU Policy, Mr Dahlgren highlighted the Government's three priorities, and how it intends to work on them at EU level.

[Sweden can do better: the Government's policy priorities](#)

The first of the Government's priorities is breaking down segregation and putting a stop to violence and criminality.

“Through the EU, Sweden has the opportunity to combat criminal gangs with considerably greater force. Over the past year, cooperation between police authorities across Europe has time and time again delivered concrete results in the fight against crime,” said Mr Dahlgren.

The second priority is advancing the climate transition and creating jobs throughout the country.

“We have to end the climate crisis. And the EU must lead the way with an ambitious climate policy. All around Europe, attention is being directed to what is happening in Sweden. Green reindustrialisation, with carbon dioxide-free steel production and large-scale battery production, is showing the way towards a sustainable society,” said Mr Dahlgren.

The Government's third priority is taking back control over the welfare



system and ensuring that everyone who works has secure social insurance and pensions.

“The pandemic is the greatest threat our welfare has faced for a very long time. But in the midst of this health crisis, there is reason to highlight the success of the EU countries’ joint procurement of vaccines against COVID-19. It has contributed to the unprecedentedly rapid development of safe and effective vaccines, which has saved many lives,” Mr Dahlgren emphasised.

Safeguarding the EU’s fundamental values is also important to the Minister for EU Affairs and the Government:

“Cooperation in the EU builds on the Member States’ pledge to respect our fundamental values. This is why it is a matter of very serious concern when, in several Member States, respect for these values is lacking. The Government will push for the European Commission to continue to take action to reverse this trend.”

Mr Dahlgren also touched on the security situation in the EU’s neighbourhood and emphasised that the EU is Sweden’s most important foreign and security policy arena:

“Russia’s recent unacceptable demands and ultimatums have met with European and transatlantic unity and steadfastness. This includes preparedness to impose extensive and severe sanctions if Russia further aggravates the situation. Such sanctions are most effective if they are implemented jointly, at EU level.”

It is now less than a year until Sweden takes over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and in this context, Mr Dahlgren said:

“It is an important undertaking that involves moving the Council’s agenda forward and helping ensure that the EU can take decisions that benefit Europe’s citizens.”

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# Overall political direction for Sweden's Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2023

At the EU's General Affairs Council meeting on 14 December, the ministers for EU affairs approved the overall political direction for the French, Czech and Swedish Presidencies of the Council – known as the 18-month programme. The trio Presidency took over in January 2022, and Sweden will lead the work of the Council between 1 January and 30 June 2023.

“I look forward to working closely with France and the Czech Republic, which will hold the Presidency in 2022. This is how we will lay the foundations for a successful Swedish Presidency in spring 2023,” says Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren.

The presidencies, which rotate every six months, are to work in the interests of the Union as a whole and have to deal with the issues of the day in the Council. The joint [18-month programme](#) will help ensure continuity in the Council's work and facilitate support and assistance between the countries of the trio. The programme is a document setting out the overall political direction and containing the issues that will be addressed in the Council by the incoming trio. The structure follows the four main priorities of the strategic agenda adopted by the European Council in 2019, which will guide the work of the institutions during the current legislative period, which runs until 2024.

## **One year until Sweden's Presidency**

“On 1 January 2023, Sweden will take over the Presidency of the Council of

the European Union. The most important task is to drive the EU agenda forward and deliver decisions that benefit EU citizens,” says Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren.

Sweden is to lead the negotiations in a professional, efficient and impartial manner in the common interest of the EU.

“How a Presidency conducts negotiations is important. Everyone should have their say, and we should listen to all Member States equally,” says Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren.

There is also some scope for influencing the agenda as an individual nation, including through the priorities and the six-month programme that each country holding the Presidency produces. These will be presented shortly before the start of the Swedish Presidency.

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# Work ahead of Sweden's Presidency in 2023

The Presidency of the Council rotates between EU Member States every six months. During a six-month period, the Presidency will drive forward the Council's work on EU legislation, ensure continuity of the EU agenda and ensure that legislative processes are carried out in an orderly manner and that Member States cooperate. The two main tasks of the Presidency are to plan and chair the meetings of the Council and its preparatory bodies and to represent the Council in its relations with other EU institutions.

## **Sweden will lead more than 2 000 meetings**

During Sweden's six-month Presidency, the Government and the Government Offices of Sweden will chair most of the meetings of the Council of the European Union. This applies to both ministerial and preparatory meetings. In total, there will be about 2 000 meetings in Brussels and Luxembourg and about 150 informal meetings and conferences in Sweden. This is around the same number of meetings as Sweden organised during its last Presidency in 2009.

## **Priorities during the Presidency**

Member States holding the Presidency work closely together in a group of three Member States, known as a trio. The three Member States set long-term goals and draw up a joint agenda for an 18-month period. On the basis of this programme, each of the three countries develops its own more detailed six-month programme.

Sweden is part of a trio Presidency along with France and the Czech Republic. The countries' [18-month programme](#) was presented in December

2021. Sweden's six-month programme and its priorities will be presented at a later date.

“The focus of the Presidency is to ensure that the work of the Council of the European Union takes place in the best possible way so that the EU can deliver good decisions for its citizens. The Presidency is also an opportunity to show Sweden and Swedish conditions to our European colleagues,” says Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren.

### **Preparatory work**

The preparatory work of the Government and the Government Offices of Sweden is underway and will gradually be intensified. Preparations include recruiting staff, planning training activities and planning meetings. The ambition is a climate-smart, digital, cost-effective, communicative and transparent Presidency.

To enable preparation for and implementation of the EU Presidency, the appropriation to the Government Offices of Sweden will be temporarily increased. The total budget, as set out in the Budget Bill for 2021, is estimated at SEK 1 250 million, divided into SEK 40 million in 2021, SEK 350 million in 2022 and SEK 860 million in 2023.

This will be the third time that Sweden has held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Sweden held the Presidency for the first time in 2001 and, most recently, in the second half of 2009. The situation in 2023 looks a little different due to the changes following from the Treaty of Lisbon.

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# Minimum wages discussed during French ministerial visit

On Monday, Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren and Minister for Employment Eva Nordmark met with French Minister of Labour, Employment and Economic Inclusion Élisabeth Borne and French Minister of State for European Affairs Clément Beaune. The aim of the meeting was to discuss various current issues, with a focus on the EU minimum wage proposal.

In October 2020, the European Commission adopted a proposal for a directive on adequate minimum wages in the EU. The Swedish Government, in close dialogue with the social partners, has worked to ensure that the European Commission's proposal on minimum wages does not become legally binding.

During Tuesday's meeting with Ms Borne and Mr Beaune, talks centred on topics such as minimum wages ahead of France taking over the Presidency of the EU in January 2022.

“I am highly critical of the EU wanting to interfere in Swedish wage formation. For Sweden, it is about making clear that the social partners must be in charge of wage formation. Research has repeatedly shown that our approach to wage formation has served Swedish wage earners well for several decades, and we cannot jeopardise this,” says Ms Nordmark.

The discussion also touched on joint efforts ahead of France's and Sweden's upcoming EU Presidencies in the trio programme. Other important issues addressed at the meeting were climate change and respect for the rule of law among EU Member States, including human rights of LGBTIQ people.

“France is a strong voice in the EU that is closely aligned with Sweden on a number of issues – particularly with respect to the importance of all EU

Member States respecting the rule of law. I look forward to our continued collaboration on this and other issues ahead of our upcoming Presidencies,” says Mr Dahlgren.

Job training, the agreement between the social partners, and public funding for the unemployed were also discussed during the meeting.

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# Hans Dahlgren: The EU leads the way on climate action

On Wednesday, the European Commission presented ‘Fit for 55’, the EU’s new climate package. The package contains the Commission’s proposals for reducing emissions by at least 55 per cent by 2030, compared with 1990 levels. Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren welcomes the package, which represents a major and important step for the EU’s climate action.

The ‘Fit for 55’ climate package was presented on Wednesday by the European Commission. It contains proposals for more ambitious emissions targets across the energy and transport sectors and an extended emissions trading system. This would contribute to the EU reaching the new 2030 climate target of reducing emissions by at least 55 per cent, compared with 1990 levels.

“The climate crisis is urgent and that’s why the proposal presented by the Commission today is important. The EU is now moving from targets to action and at the same time it’s showing the rest of the world what can be done, because the EU is leading the way on this,” says Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren.

The climate package also includes a clearer energy taxation system and proposals for a carbon border adjustment mechanism – a carbon border tax – to equalise the price on greenhouse gas emissions. It also entails stricter rules on carbon dioxide emissions from the maritime and aviation sectors and vehicles.

“This is a first important step towards the EU’s target of climate neutrality by 2050. Now we need to take a close look at the details of the proposal and then take part in the negotiations with other Member States to ensure that this will be as good as possible. But the approach to an overall transition to



more sustainable production and consumption is totally right, both in the EU and the EU's trading partners," says Mr Dahlgren.

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Government Offices of Sweden

# Conference on the Future of Europe – a public dialogue on the future of Europe

The Conference on the Future of Europe will be launched on 9 May, Europe Day, and will run for a year. It will conclude in spring 2022 during the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

On 10 March, European Parliament President David Sassoli, Prime Minister of Portugal António Costa, on behalf of the Presidency of the Council, and Commission President Ursula von der Leyen signed the Joint Declaration on the Conference on the Future of Europe. The Declaration establishes the framework of the Conference, which aims to strengthen democracy in Europe and increase the opportunity for people to express their views and discuss EU issues and thereby influence Europe's future.

## **The Conference will be carried out at a local, national and EU level**

At European level, the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union will organise European citizens' dialogues. Member States and other European and national actors can organise events, such as public citizens debates, discussions on different policy areas and different types of seminars.

Input from all the events will be collected, analysed and published throughout the Conference via a multilingual digital platform. This will also be a space for citizens to share their ideas and submit suggestions online.

[Conference on the Future of Europe \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu)

A Conference Plenary organized by the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union will discuss the ideas from these without a predetermined outcome.

## **Broad participation**

An important aim of the Conference on the Future of Europe is to engage citizens throughout society in a dialogue on EU issues, and to target young people, in particular. The Minister for EU Affairs plans, for example, to continue his discussions with young people, through different channels.

The Government considers itself as one of several actors in Sweden that has a leading role in organising and participating in the dialogue on Europe's future. Participation by civil society, the Riksdag, political parties, the social partners and regional and local representatives creates favourable conditions to reach to and engage citizens from all walks of life.

An important ambition is that participation in the activities that are organised will incorporate a gender perspective.

## **Government will contribute to an active and interactive dialogue on the EU**

In Sweden, the discussion on the EU's future has taken place through various initiatives in recent years. The aim is to increase citizens' insight into decision-making processes at EU level to a comparable level as at the municipal, regional and national level. Spreading information and knowledge about EU policy and listening to citizens are essential to achieving this objective.

The Swedish Government works actively and resolutely to encourage more people and organisations to take an interest and engage in EU issues. During 2020, school visits carried out by the Minister for EU Affairs have been an important arena for citizens' dialogues with young people. The 'EU Handshake' initiative, launched in December 2016, aims to boost participation, knowledge and engagement in EU-related issues in Sweden.

The Minister for EU Affairs is leading and is responsible for the Government's work with the Conference on the Future of Europe.

## **Vision of a more resilient EU for its citizens**

The hope is that the conference will be able to contribute to a lively discussion among citizens about EU policy and the cross-border challenges facing Europe. The Government's EU priorities focus on five areas: democracy and the rule of law, climate, jobs, immigration and security. These will guide the Government's participation in the Conference on the

future of Europe.

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# Social Summit: Non-paper by Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands and Sweden

Given the COVID-19 pandemic with large socioeconomic consequences for all Member States and the upcoming twin digital and green transitions, the Social Summit comes at a timely moment. The Action Plan on the Pillar of Social Rights by the Commission is a welcome contribution to the discussions at the Social Summit. This non-paper by Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands and Sweden contains input for the declaration of the Summit.

The Pillar of Social Rights and its principles contribute to a deeper and fairer single market. The Social Pillar serves as a compass for effective social and labour market policies, and promotes the exchange of good practices between Member States. In this way, it supports reforms in the Member States and encourages the process of upward socioeconomic convergence.

As also emphasized in the Action Plan, the effective implementation of the Social Pillar greatly depends on the action of Member States, who primarily hold responsibility for employment, education and skills and social policies. Targeted EU-level action can complement national action, but – as underlined in the Strategic Agenda by the European Council and in the European Pillar of Social Rights – any action on EU-level should fully respect the division of competences of the Union, its Member States and the

social partners. Any EU initiative in these areas should be in line with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and needs careful consideration of different national starting points, challenges and institutional set ups. Setting EU-level headline targets could help to steer national debates, policies and reforms.

The three proposed new EU headline targets provide important political guidance and can contribute to fostering convergence and wellbeing. Considering the challenges ahead the closely interlinked areas of employment, skills, and poverty/social exclusion are well chosen. Monitoring mechanisms at EU-level need to adequately reflect the situation and starting points within Member States.

Creating quality jobs to boost employment is instrumental to support the economic recovery, reverse the negative social impacts of the crisis and accelerate the green and digital transitions, in a sustainable and inclusive way. Specific attention should be paid to the digital and green transitions. In the coming decade jobs will be created in green and digital companies and sectors. The recovery phase offers a unique opportunity to accelerate these transitions, create these jobs in Europe and hence make our labour markets future proof. Small and medium-sized enterprises play a key role in job creation. Equal opportunities, inclusiveness, an innovative economy, good and fair working conditions and creating quality jobs should be our goal, while taking gender equality aspects into account.

The recovery and green and digital transitions should be supported by providing people with the needed skills and qualifications. The transitions will significantly change labour markets and create opportunities as well as challenges. These developments underscore the importance of ensuring adaptability, flexibility and resilience of workers and job seekers. Basic skills, such as literacy, math and digital skills are essential for people to participate in the labour market. Once active on the inclusive labour market, lifelong learning will support people to get and stay in the driving seat of their own careers, while at the same time boosting the competitiveness of the EU in the global context.

Finally, more and better quality jobs across Europe will reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion. We should pay specific attention to vulnerable groups who have been hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis. The EU strives to be inclusive and sustainable for all. Against this background, addressing poverty and social exclusion of the most vulnerable, the overall wellbeing of

children, active ageing, as well as the inclusion of persons with disabilities is of the utmost importance. Social dialogue and constructive cooperation of employers and employees is indispensable

Published 23 April 2021



# Draft agreement between the EU and the UK

The Swedish Government welcomes the fact that EU and UK negotiators have now agreed a draft agreement on the future relationship between the EU and the UK.

“It is very gratifying that the negotiators have now reached an agreement. This is something that we in the EU have worked together on for a long time. The agreement will be an important basis for the continued relationship with the UK,” says Prime Minister Stefan Löfven.

The fact that the draft agreement is now in place creates predictability for Swedish citizens and companies. A no-deal scenario between the EU and the UK has thus been avoided.

“This is good for Sweden, good for the EU, and good for the UK. The agreement is broad and spans many areas. In addition to a free trade agreement and rules for a level playing field, the agreement also covers important areas such as internal security, fisheries, transport, climate and environment. It provides the conditions for long-term cooperation and good relations between the EU and the UK in the future,” says Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren.

The agreement has been negotiated on the basis of the negotiating mandate given by the Member States to the European Commission. The text is currently being analysed and will be reviewed by EU Member States in the Council in the coming days. To enter into application from 1 January, the agreement needs to be approved by the UK parliament. The Council must also adopt a decision to apply it provisionally, as the European Parliament will not be able to consider it until after the turn of the year.

“The fact that the negotiators from the EU and the UK were finally able to present a draft agreement demonstrates the taking of shared responsibility and the great value of regulated and deep cooperation,” adds Mr Dahlgren.



Published 24 December 2020



# Turkey and Belarus at EU Summit

The EU's relations with Turkey and the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean were on the agenda when EU leaders met in Brussels on 1–2 October. Heads of state and government also received a short update on the negotiations with the United Kingdom.

## **Turkey and Belarus**

“Late last night, agreement was reached on a text about the Eastern Mediterranean and Turkey. There were several interruptions in the discussions and a number of bilateral talks were held before the texts were sufficiently sharply worded for Cyprus to agree to lift its veto on the Belarus sanctions. Among other things, the conclusions now state that if there is any more unilateral action on the part of Turkey or provocations in contravention of international law, the EU will use all the instruments and paths of action at its disposal. There is also special reference to the sections of the Treaty about how sanctions are agreed,” said Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren after the summit.

“Once that issue was resolved, we were quickly able to agree on sanctions against those responsible in Belarus. It has now been almost two months since the election, which was deemed illegitimate, and it is most certainly high time that the EU takes action,” added Mr Dahlgren.

Heads of state and government also discussed the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh and the nerve agent attack against Alexei Navalny.

The summit concluded with the European Commission updating EU leaders on the negotiations over the future relationship with the UK.

Sweden was represented by Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin.

Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren followed the summit closely on site

in Brussels.

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# Belarus, Turkey, China and single market on EU Summit agenda

The situation in Belarus and that in Turkey are two of the foreign policy issues that EU leaders will discuss when they meet in Brussels on 1–2 October. The heads of state and government will also discuss the European single market and relations with China.

## **Foreign policy issues**

The EU heads of state and government will begin the summit with a discussion of the EU's relationship with China. They will then discuss the unstable situation in Belarus following the presidential election on 9 August and the nerve agent attack against Alexei Navalny.

In the evening, EU leaders will focus on the EU's relations with Turkey. They will also discuss the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.

## **Single market, industrial policy and digitalisation**

On Friday, discussions will focus on the European single market. The point of departure for discussions will be how to improve industrial policy in the EU and what opportunities digitalisation offers.

At the end of the summit, EU leaders are expected to receive an update on the negotiations over the United Kingdom's future relationship with the EU from chief negotiator Michel Barnier.

Sweden will be represented by Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin at the summit.

Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren will follow the summit closely on site in Brussels.

Published 02 October 2020



# Joint Statement by Ministers Dahlgren and Tuppurainen: functioning single market key to recovery

COVID-19 pandemic has presented the European Union with unprecedented challenges. The social and economic impact of the pandemic is significant. An ambitious action is needed to safeguard the well-being of citizens and to put Europe on a recovery path.

The well-functioning single market is a guarantee of EU's prosperity, and the value of it for citizens and businesses has been proved during the recent crisis months. Securing and strengthening the single market should be at the heart of EU's recovery and long-term growth.

It is vital that the EU can harness the full potential of the single market. This includes a stronger focus on implementation and enforcement of already existing EU legislation – in other words: we must carry out what we have agreed upon in the Council. Making full use of our strengths in the digital economy, climate-neutral technologies and circular economy helps build lasting sustainable growth and boosts competitiveness and renewal of European economy.

The free movement of services is at the core of the single market, and could provide significant economic gains, provided there is adequate and active enforcement by local, regional and national authorities and the Commission. On our road to recovery, new impetus must therefore be given to the internal market for services and the eliminating of barriers. A recovery plan should include the implementation of the Commissions' March communication.

A fair, open and competitive home market needs to remain a starting point in promoting the level playing field globally and within the EU. This goes hand in hand with maintaining a strict and independent competition policy. Any distortions of competition weaken our competitiveness in the longer run.

The temporary regime for state aid during the crisis is of utmost importance. However, for the further development of the European economy, it is vital that competition and state aid rules remain strict and efficient. They must allow effective interventions against anti-competitive practices and ensure the level playing field between Member States

International trade will play a major role in overcoming the COVID 19-crisis and supporting the recovery process in the EU and worldwide. EU's role as a defender of multilateral cooperation and rules based free trade is crucial in the times of protectionist tendencies. The discussion on European strategic autonomy must not lead to protectionism.

A need to evaluate EU's trade policy after COVID-19 is something that should be looked at with patience and care, without jumping into conclusions. We must be pragmatic and not forget the vast benefits that have been brought by decades of free trade. The EU should always be a champion of free trade, not an instigator of trade wars.

Tytti Tuppurainen  
Minister for European Affairs and Ownership Steering  
Finland

Hans Dahlgren  
Minister for European Affairs  
Sweden

Published 05 June 2020



# Joint Statement – Rule of Law in the context of the Covid-19 crisis

Joint Statement by Sweden, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

In this unprecedented situation, it is legitimate that Member States adopt extraordinary measures to protect their citizens and overcome the crisis. We are however deeply concerned about the risk of violations of the principles of rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights arising from the adoption of certain emergency measures. Emergency measures should be limited to what is strictly necessary, should be proportionate and temporary in nature, subject to regular scrutiny, and respect the aforementioned principles and international law obligations.

They should not restrict the freedom of expression or the freedom of the press. We need to jointly overcome this crisis and to jointly uphold our European principles and values on this path. We therefore support the European Commission initiative to monitor the emergency measures and their application to ensure the fundamental values of the Union are upheld, and invite the General Affairs Council to take up the matter when appropriate.

**After the publication of the joint Statement, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary announced that they have joined the Statement.**

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# Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren and Minister for Foreign Trade and Nordic Affairs Anna Hallberg ahead of the UK withdrawal from the EU

The UK left the EU on 1 February. What happens now and what does the transition period that begins entail? What form will future relations between the EU and the UK take? Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren and Minister for Foreign Trade and Nordic Affairs Anna Hallberg discuss some of the details in an interview.

**The UK will leave the EU at midnight on 31 January. What is your view on this?**

**Hans Dahlgren, Minister for EU Affairs:**

“They have taken a democratic decision and now it’s a matter of making the best of the situation. We have a great deal of contact with the UK. We buy and sell a lot of goods from one another. There are many Swedes who work and study there, and we have many UK nationals living in Sweden. We need to maintain a good relationship moving ahead, and that’s what we will focus on in the coming year.”

**Anna Hallberg, Minister for Foreign Trade and Nordic Affairs:**

“Now we really have to look to the future. The UK is one of our most important trading partners. We have 30 000 companies that trade daily with the UK. This affects jobs and welfare throughout the country. Now we really have to make sure we have a really good basis to maintain good trade relations with the UK in the future.”

**After the UK leaves the EU, there will be a transition period until 31**

## **December 2020. What does this entail?**

### **Hans Dahlgren, Minister for EU Affairs:**

“Throughout the year, up until 31 December, essentially the same conditions will apply as when the UK was a member. This means that they are still in the single market. They are still in the customs union. The same regulations apply regarding travel and visits. The only difference is that they will no longer have any influence over what we decide in the EU. They cannot be involved with the European Council, the European Court of Justice or the European Parliament. But this only applies this year, and we must make the best possible use of this time to reach a new relationship and new agreements with the UK.”

### **Anna Hallberg, Minister for Foreign Trade and Nordic Affairs:**

“The Government gives priority to jobs and welfare, and so the UK represents an important partner for us when it comes to creating jobs and welfare among all the 30 000 companies that trade with the UK. For us, it is important to reach a good trade agreement and to prioritise issues such as trade in goods and services, and that we can continue our successful research cooperation with the UK.”

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Government Offices of Sweden

# The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region ten years

This month, October 2019, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region will turn officially ten years. What has this strategy entailed for Sweden, and what are the challenges facing the Baltic Sea Region today? We asked Hans Dahlgren, Swedish Minister for EU Affairs.

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