



MINISTÈRE
DE L'ÉCONOMIE,
DES FINANCES
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Informal Competitiveness Council

Industry and Interior Market

Lens, France, 31 January and 1 February 2022

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A WORD FROM THE MINISTER



Agnès Pannier-Runacher
Minister Delegate
for Industry

The French Presidency of the Council of the European Union has made strengthening Europe's strategic autonomy one of its fundamental priorities.

To achieve our goal, we must secure European industry's supply of critical raw materials, which will allow us to deliver the digital and green transformation of our economy, while preserving the competitiveness of European businesses. It does not make sense, after all, to go from being dependent on fossil fuels to being dependent on rare-earth elements.

That is why we must take steps – drawing on the work the European Commission has undertaken – to identify our vulnerabilities and adopt a common roadmap on these matters.

Our first step must be to develop a circular economy, as this will help EU industry make the transition to sustainable practices, and it will reduce our reliance on external supply chains, while creating tens of thousands of jobs.

What is more, a successful innovation policy will increase our recycling capabilities and help us find alternatives to certain strategic raw materials.

As a second step, we must secure access to raw materials from sources outside the EU in order to meet our high demand, but we must pursue this goal responsibly and with a long-term view. In the same vein, we need to ensure refining capacity downstream of production. Oil-dependent companies must be informed of potential bottlenecks and plan accordingly for them in their strategy.

Lastly, we will examine what primary resources Europe may hold, although they are limited.

The EU must take these three steps and others in order to secure our supply of critical raw materials and to ensure our strategic autonomy, while promoting high labour and environmental standards in line with Europe's ambitious goals.

The informal Competitiveness Council of EU Ministers for Industry – to be held on 31 January and 1 February 2022 in Lens, France, and which I have the honour of chairing – will focus on a range of issues around Europe's supply of raw materials and discuss them in depth.

Our Union is our greatest asset as we work to meet our goals in terms of strategic autonomy, the green and digital transformations, the competitiveness of European businesses and consumer protection. I am confident that we will overcome these challenges and build a more resilient Europe.

INTRODUCTION

The French Presidency of the Council of the European Union

On 1 January 2022, for the first time in 14 years, France will take over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. How does the Council of the EU work and what will France's role be?

What does the Presidency of the Council of the European Union involve?

A rotating Presidency

Each Member State holds the presidency of the Council of the European Union for six months on a rotating basis. France will hold the Presidency of the Council of the EU from 1 January to 30 June 2022. The Presidency of the Council organises meetings, brokers compromises, submits conclusions and ensures the coherency and continuity of the decision-making process. It ensures good cooperation between all Member States and acts as a liaison between the Council and the European institutions, in particular the Commission and the European Parliament.

What is the Council of the European Union?

The Council of the European Union, also called the Council of Ministers, or simply the Council, brings together the ministers of the EU Member States who meet in configurations by sector of activity. It serves as the co-legislator of the European Union, along with the European Parliament.

Concretely, ministers will chair ten sectors or configurations of the Council of the EU: general affairs, economic and financial affairs, justice and home affairs, employment, social policy, health and consumer protection policy; competitiveness (internal market, industry, research and space); transport, telecommunications and energy; agriculture and fisheries; environment; education, youth, culture and sport; trade.

Exceptionally, the Foreign Affairs Council is chaired by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, currently Mr Josep Borrell.

The Council also has budgetary powers; it adopts and amends the European budget with the Parliament. Lastly, the Council adopts certain decisions as well as non-binding recommendations, concludes international agreements on behalf of the EU, and appoints members of certain institutions such as the European Court of Auditors, the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions. The Council's deliberations and votes on legislative texts are public.

What is the framework for the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union?

The PFUE follows the main policy lines that President Macron set out in his speech for a sovereign, united and democratic Europe on 26 September 2017 at the Sorbonne. For the past four years, President Macron and the Government have been working to build genuine European sovereignty, meaning Europe's ability to exist in the world and to defend our values and interests. The French Presidency of the Council of the European Union will continue this work for a more inclusive, sovereign and democratic Europe.

The PFUE meets citizens' expectations, which were expressed in the citizen debates held in September in 18 French regions as part of the Conference on the Future of Europe. This project, proposed by France in 2019, established a new forum for debate with European citizens. The final

contribution of these national panels was submitted to the Government in the autumn. Recommendations made by citizens, in France and in Europe, have helped determine the priorities of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The PFUE coordinates within the trio presidency programme, with which France aligns its action. This system, which has existed since 2009, sets long-term goals and defines the main topics to be addressed over a period of 18 months. After the Slovenian Presidency, France will begin a new cycle and will work as a trio with the Czech Republic in the second half of 2022 and Sweden in the first half of 2023.

Nearly 400 events

A total of nearly 400 events planned in France and the EU will punctuate the Presidency: political meetings, a cultural programme and citizen events open to everyone.

→ Find all information about the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union on the Presidency's official website and social media:

- Website: www.europe2022.fr
- [Facebook](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [YouTube](#)
- [Flickr](#)

The Council of the European Union should not be confused with:

- **The European Council**, which brings together Heads of State and Government of Member States and defines the overall political direction and priorities of the European Union. Its current President is Charles Michel.
- **The Council of Europe**, which is an intergovernmental organisation made up of 47 Member States. Founded in 1949, the Council of Europe promotes human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Its seat is in Strasbourg and its Secretary-General is Marija Pejčinović Burić.

For more information:

- www.touteleurope.eu
- www.consilium.europa.eu/fr/council-eu/

AIMS OF THE CONFERENCE

On 31 January and 1 February 2022, the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union will bring together the EU's 27 Industry and Internal Market Ministers in Lens, France, to discuss how Europe can strengthen its strategic autonomy by identifying and reducing the vulnerabilities that affect the region. The meeting will focus in particular on securing the supply of raw materials for European industry.

1. Background and scope of issues

In the short term, supply problems impact production conditions, schedules and costs, while also putting a drag on Europe's competitiveness and putting at stake businesses and jobs. In the long term, they pose a threat to our ability to green and digitalise our economy, respond to crises and develop sectors key to the future, including renewable energy, electric mobility, healthcare, and cloud and 5G infrastructure.

For example, today Europe relies heavily on Asia for active pharmaceutical ingredients, importing 80% of such products, and optical fibre cables (China produces 25% of the world's supply), among others. Raw materials, however, represent our most critical vulnerability: China currently ensures 60% of the global supply of rare-earth elements and meets 98% of Europe's demand for these materials, which are essential components used in producing electronics and renewable energy.

In its May 2021 Industrial Strategy update, the European Commission identified a list of **137 products** that put Europe in a vulnerable position. They mainly concern sectors such as healthcare, defence and digital technology. The European Commission should present the results of its analysis of the EU's strategic dependencies with the publication of its Annual Single Market Report in the first quarter of 2022.

The EU has already taken tangible steps to strengthen its autonomy in strategic sectors by:

- **Launching transformative industrial projects at EU level:** In 2019, Member States began undertaking Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEIs) in areas like electric vehicle batteries and microelectronics, and are working on new IPCEIs on hydrogen, cloud computing, electronics and connectivity, and healthcare.
- **Improving our crisis-response capabilities:** The EU created the European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA) to foster research and innovation for critical medical products.
- **Rolling out new funding programmes:** The €750bn NextGenEU recovery plan provides support to a number of critical industrial ecosystems. For one, it plays a central role in the *France Relance* recovery plan, which provides funding for decarbonising and digitising industry, while propping up our most critical sectors.
- **Expanding European industry in a fair competitive environment:** Trade defence instruments (TDIs) shield Member States from unfair trade practices used by non-EU countries when exporting key inputs like steel. The EU established in October 2020 of a framework for the screening of foreign direct investments (FDIs) which has improved the Union's ability to monitor investments made by non-EU countries. Lastly, the May 2021 proposal for a regulation on foreign subsidies distorting the internal market seeks to remedy the distortions caused by subsidies granted by non-EU governments to their firms.

2. Aims

Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President for Inter-institutional Relations and Foresight at the European Commission, and Thierry Breton, Commissioner for the Internal Market, will present the Commission's work on strengthening the Union's strategic autonomy, a goal which is at the heart of the May 2021 EU Industrial Strategy update.

EU Ministers and Commissioners will meet for a series of events, including:

- A plenary discussion on strengthening Europe's strategic autonomy and which will allow us to:
 - agree on a clear course of action for reducing our vulnerabilities and take stock of the EU's efforts to reduce the region's dependencies, under way since March 2020 aimed at decreasing ;
 - consider alternative steps that can be taken to reduce these dependencies, such as the upcoming EU Chips Act, which seeks to increase our semiconductor production capacity;
 - address the issue of securing and sustaining the EU's supply of raw materials;

- A working lunch with Philippe Varin, former Chair of *France Industrie*, who will provide an overview of the issue of raw material access and discuss what the EU can do to secure its supply, building on the report submitted to the French government on 10 January 2022;

- Three breakout sessions which will further explore:
 - (i) what action can be taken to secure the supply of non-EU raw materials while remaining in compliance with labour and environmental standards;
 - (ii) what benefits can be derived from the circular economy, innovation and less intensive consumption patterns in order to reduce our reliance on raw materials;
 - (iii) how the Union can increase its domestic production of raw materials and what requirements must be met on the labour and environmental front.

MEETING AGENDA

31 January

8pm–11pm Ministers' working dinner

1 February

8.30am–9am **Greeting of delegates by Agnès Pannier-Runacher, Minister Delegate for Industry**

9am–11.45am **Plenary discussion: "What can the European Union do to strengthen its strategic autonomy?"**

11.45am–12.45pm **Official group photo and visit to the exhibition "Les Louvre de Pablo Picasso" at the Louvre-Lens Museum**

12.45pm–2pm **Working lunch: "Strategic raw materials: What is at stake for Europe"**

2pm–3.30pm **Breakout sessions**

- **Session 1:** "Non-EU sourcing: What partnerships and standards are needed to ensure the resilience and sustainability of raw material supplies?"
- **Session 2:** "Recycling, innovating, doing without: Reducing dependencies with the help of the circular economy and by developing new production methods"
- **Session 3:** "Extracting raw materials in Europe: Is domestic sourcing still possible?"

3.30pm–4.20pm **Breakout session summaries by the rapporteurs and closing remarks by the chair**

4.30pm–5.30pm **Joint press conference given by Agnès Pannier-Runacher, Minister Delegate for Industry, Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President for Inter-institutional Relations and Foresight, and Thierry Breton, Commissioner for the Internal Market**

SPEAKERS



Agnès Pannier-Runacher
Minister Delegate for Industry
France



Barbara Trachte
Secretary of State for the
Region Brussels-Capital for
Economic Transition and
Scientific Research
Belgium



Nikolay Milkov
Special and Plenipotentiary
Ambassador of Bulgaria to
France
Bulgaria



Jozef Síkela
Minister of Industry and Trade
Czech Republic



Brian Adrian Wessel
Deputy Permanent Secretary,
Legal and International Affairs
Danish Ministry for Industry,
Business and Financial Affairs
Denmark



Franziska Brantner
Parliamentary State Secretary
Germany



Andres Sutt
Minister of Entrepreneurship
and Information Technology
Estonia



Robert Troy
Minister of State for Trade
Promotion, Digital and
Company Regulation
Ireland



Thomais EFTYCHIDOU
Secretary General for Industry
Greece



Raul Blanco
Secretary General for Industry
and Small and Medium
Enterprises
Spain



Nataša Mikuš Žigman
State Secretary of the Ministry
of Economy and Sustainable
Development
Croatia



Vincenzo Amendola
Undersecretary of State for
European Affairs, Presidency of
the Council of Ministers
Italy



Marios Panayides
Permanent Secretary of the
Ministry of Energy, Commerce
and Industry
Cyprus



Ilze Indriksone
Parliamentary Secretary of the
Ministry of Economics
Latvia



Aušrinė Armonaitė
Minister of the Economy and
Innovation
Lithuania



Franz Fayot
Minister of the Economy and
Minister for Development
Cooperation and Humanitarian
Affairs
Luxembourg



**György HABSBURG-
LOTHRINGEN**
Hungarian Ambassador to France
Hungary



Lorenzo Vella
Permanent Representative of
Malta to the Council of Europe
Malta



**Monique Anne Maria
Adriaansens**
Minister of Economic Affairs
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João Neves
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Portugal



Florin Marian Spătaru
Minister of Economy
Romania



Zdravko Počivalšek
Minister of Economic
Development and Technology
Slovenia



Richard Sulík
Minister of Economy
Slovakia



Mika Lintilä
Minister of Economic Affairs
Finland



Emil Högberg
State Secretary to Minister for
Business, Industry and
Innovation
Sweden



Janicke ANDREASSEN
State Secretary for Trade and
Industry
Norway



Katja Gey-Ritter
Director of the Office of
Economic Affairs
Liechtenstein



Thierry Breton
Commissioner for the Internal
Market
European Commission



Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President for Inter-
institutional Relations and
Foresight
European Commission



Isabel Riaño Ibáñez
Director General Competitiveness
and Trade
General Secretariat of the Council

LENS, OUR HOST CITY

Lens, located in the Hauts-de-France region of northern France, was a major coal mining hub from 1852 to 1986. Since then, the Nord-Pas de Calais mining basin, home to the city and stretching across 120km, has been inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List. To get a sense of what it was like to live and work as a miner, the Mining History Centre in Lewarde, just 30 minutes outside Lens, brings 300 years of history to life for visitors.



Slag heaps at mining base 11-19, Loos-en-Gohelle © JC Hecquet

Sister to the Louvre in Paris, the Louvre-Lens Museum is built on a former mining pit, but it is also part of a UNESCO World Heritage site with an unexpectedly rich history, culture and landscape. Since the city's economic regeneration and modernisation, as well as the arrival of the Louvre-Lens, it has morphed into a vibrant, friendly place that attracts many students.



The Galerie du Temps at Louvre-Lens Museum © Philippe Chancel



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