COVID-19: Council takes steps to ensure institutional continuity

The Council is taking measures to ensure the continuity of its work in the current exceptional circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Today it agreed on a temporary derogation to its Rules of Procedure to make it easier to take decisions by written procedure.

This derogation allows EU ambassadors to decide to use the written procedure in accordance with the voting rule applicable for the adoption of the act itself. It means that the existing requirement for unanimity for all decisions to use the written procedure no longer applies.

The decision will apply for one month and may be renewed if justified by a continuation of the current exceptional circumstances.

Background

Council acts can be adopted either at formal Council meetings, or if necessary through a written procedure. The exceptional circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have prevented many ministers from travelling in order to attend Council meetings. This in turn makes it difficult to reach the required quorum, and therefore to hold formal Council meetings. Today’s decision facilitates the use of the written procedure and therefore helps ensure the continuity of Council business.

The Council presidency will continue to organise informal videoconferences of ministers where this is considered useful for the continuation of core business. These videoconferences have proved helpful in facilitating member states’ coordination in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and also provide the opportunity for debates at political level prior to the formal adoption of decisions.

Council's Rules of Procedure

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