
TUSK ON TOUR TO PREPARE FUTURE OF EU SUMMIT

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European Council President Donald Tusk met with German Chancellor Angela Merkel over dinner in Berlin yesterday (18 August). This is a first step in a series of trips to EU countries in preparation for the 16 September Bratislava informal summit on the future of the EU, following Brexit.

Little information has emerged from the dinner, held at a castle outside Berlin, without the media. It is widely assumed that apart from the Bratislava summit, the upcoming Brexit negotiations must have featured high on the agenda.

EU institutions refuse to make any comment on the negotiations, as long as the British government has not triggered article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, which kick-starts a two-year procedure for leaving the EU.

Officially, Tusk is on tour to prepare the Bratislava summit on the future of the EU following Brexit. Under the Slovak Presidency, Bratislava will host an informal summit to start the discussion. The summit is informal, because the UK has not yet left the Union, but its prime minister is not invited.

BRATISLAVA TO HOST FIRST SUMMIT ON EU'S FUTURE

An EU summit without the UK prime minister on 16 September in Bratislava will kick off the discussion on the future of EU following Brexit, EU leaders decided today (29 June).

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The Bratislava summit will take place the next day, after Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker will deliver the annual state of the Union speech in the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

Some EU leaders are widely expected to use the opportunity to present alternative views on Europe after Brexit. The Visegrad countries in particular have advocated a return of EU powers to member states.

SLOVAKIA ADVOCATES RETURNING EU POWER TO CAPITALS

Speaking to Brussels journalists on a press trip to Bratislava, the Slovak premier, and his foreign minister, shed light on their ambitions for steering the Union for the next six months, and laying the groundwork for a rethink of the EU, following the shock of the UK referendum.

Tusk intends to consult all EU leaders ahead of the Bratislava meeting with a view to discussing both its handling and substance. However, he will only be able to meet with some of them. A number of meetings have already been scheduled and confirmed for August and September.

Apart from the dinner with Merkel, Tusk has scheduled meetings with French President François Hollande, Luxembourg Prime Minister Xavier Bettel, Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny, UK Prime Minister Theresa May, Latvian Prime Minister Māris Kučinskis, Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė, Estonian Prime Minister Taavi Rõivas, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven, Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.

Interestingly, no meeting with Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydło has been announced. It remains unclear if the new Polish government will support Tusk staying on for a second term.

Donald Tusk was elected Council President for a two-and-a-half year mandate which started on 1 December 2014. This means that his mandate expires by June 2017, and that a decision to keep him on this position or to replace him should be made by the end of this year.

The president of the European Council is elected by a qualified majority for a term of two and a half years, which is renewable once. The former Belgian Prime Minister, Herman Van Rompuy, was the first President of the European Council between 2009 and 2012, and was then re-elected for a second term until 30 November 2014.

Although treaties say nothing on the matter, it is assumed that the candidate for council president is strongly supported by their own country.

Diplomats said that the new Polish government would be foolish not to propose Tusks re-election. In the context of the Brexit negotiations, Poland has a lot at stake, with one million Poles living in the UK.

Kaynak/Source: