

Priorities of the Maltese Presidency of the European Union (EU) February 2017

On January 1st 2017, Malta took over the rotating Presidency of the European Council, third in the EU Presidency Trio after the Netherlands (January – June 2016) and Slovakia (July – December 2016). Per the Lisbon Treaty, the Trio's successive presidencies address priorities and issues previously listed in a common 18-month agenda. For the smallest country in the EU, which entered the Union in 2004, the support of Slovakia and the Netherlands is likely valuable.

KEY POLITICAL PRIORITIES

Maltese Deputy Prime Minister Louis Grech announced **six high priorities** for the six months of its Presidency:

Migration comes first, with Malta seeking to carry on discussions on the reform of the Common European Asylum System, notably the revision of the [Dublin Regulation](#) and the European Asylum Support Office.

Regarding **security**, the Maltese Presidency program insists on improving external borders management, a better inter-state coordination on criminal justice and continuing discussions on the legislative proposals included in the Action Plan on the [Fight Against Terrorist Financing](#).

Malta will also pay attention to the legislative proposals relative to **single market, social inclusion and neighborhood policies** and finally, as expected from an island country, to promote a better governance for the sustainable development of **international oceans and the seas**.

POLITICAL MILESTONES

Malta's Presidency program is likely to know some setbacks, firstly, because of **changes in the EU institutional dynamics**, *i.e.* internal mid-term elections of the EU Parliament, and the **political environment in EU Member States** such as France, Germany and the Netherlands that will hold general elections in the following six months.

Second, the decision making at the highest level could become more complicated, with consequences on specific policy dossiers, because of the uncertainty deriving from the relations with **the new US President and Administration** and the **"Brexit" calendar**.

MALTA'S EU PRESIDENCY PROGRAMME BY DOSSIERS

DIGITAL

The EU Commission has already presented the large majority of its sixteen legislative and non-legislative proposals included in the Digital Single Market Strategy. The co-legislators, the Parliament and the Council, have however not adopted any of the presented legislative proposals yet.

The Maltese EU Presidency will **give priority to the e-commerce legislative proposals**. It will particularly try to move forward discussions on the proposal for a [Directive on the supply of digital content](#) and **initiate discussions on the proposal for a Directive on contracts for the online and other distance sales of goods**. Currently, the two proposed Directives are in discussion at Committee level in Parliament and are also subject to informal discussions at working group level in Council.

The proposal for a **Regulation on cross-border portability** of online content services will also be under scrutiny. The EU Parliament should hold its first reading on this proposal in April, whereas the Council already reached a general approach agreement on the text in May 2016.

Discussions on the legislative proposals relative to the **copyright reform** should also be taken forward, although the Presidency **avoids giving specific objectives**.

Finally, the Maltese EU Presidency will dedicate time to the **Council's own work on cybersecurity**, namely the reflection work of its newly formed **Cyber Issues Horizontal Working Party** and the launch of a Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox for EU diplomats, expected for February 2017.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

The Maltese Presidency will drive trilogue negotiations on the **wholesale roaming implementing act** foreseen by the [2015 Regulation on Open Internet Access](#), initiated in December 2016 by the Slovak EU Presidency.

Picking up on the Slovak presidency that reached an informal agreement with the EU Parliament on the [Ultra-High Frequency Band Decision](#) in December 2016, Malta seeks its formal adoption. The Decision notably provides for Member States to reallocate the 700 MHz band, currently used for digital television broadcasting and wireless microphones, to wireless broadband services.

The Maltese Presidency will also push discussion on the Telecoms Framework package, launched in September 2016, yet without taking any specific commitment. The Presidency will focus mostly on the [proposal for the "WiFi4EU" Regulation](#), which seeks to increase the funding program for infrastructures established by the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) program.

FINANCE

Malta will carry on the actions undertaken in the banking and financial sector, particularly the action plan to build a **Capital Markets Union (CMU)** which was presented as one of the top priorities of the 2014-2019 Commission but has known very few concrete progresses.

The [Prospectus Directive Review](#) should be finalized early in 2017, as a final agreement between the Commission, Parliament and Council was reached in December 2016, but the trilogue on creating a [framework for Simple, Transparent and Standardized Securitization \(STS\)](#), which started in January 2017, is not expected to go very smoothly.

The Maltese Presidency also aims to make progress on the review of the so-called **CRD IV package**, including the Capital Requirements Directive (CRDIV), as well as the Capital Requirements Regulation (CRR), and to continue the work on the [Commission's proposal on the recovery and resolution of Central Counterparties \(CCPs\)](#) that was also made in November.

Malta will also seek to make progress on the **Anti-Tax Avoidance Package**, and to kick off negotiations on amending the EU Venture Capital and Social Entrepreneurship Funds (EUVeCa/EUSEF) Regulations.

ENERGY

The EU Commission presented several legislative proposals on energy throughout 2015 and 2016.

Of all, the Malta EU Presidency will **initiate informal discussions** on the proposed Directives on [Energy Efficiency](#) and on the [Energy Performance of Buildings](#), both launched in November 2016, with the objective of reaching a **general approach in Council**.

Taking over the Slovak EU Presidency's work, Malta will try to reach an inter-institutional agreement on the [proposed Regulation on Energy Efficiency Labelling](#), presented by the Commission in July 2015. The EU Parliament had voted on this text in July 2016, after which inter-institutional negotiations kicked off in September 2016.

The Maltese Presidency will **seek to reach a political agreement with the European Parliament** on the review of the [Regulation on Security of Gas Supply](#), presented by the Commission in February 2016.

The Maltese Presidency will also strive to highlight the potential of the **Mediterranean region** as a source of energy diversification. A High Level Ministerial meeting with EU Member States and third countries around the Mediterranean see is thus scheduled for May 2017.

EVENTS OF THE MALTESE PRESIDENCY

[Provisional calendar of meetings under the Maltese Presidency of the Council](#)

[Provisional agendas for Council meetings during the Maltese Presidency](#)

[Cultural and Political Events](#)