
MALTESE PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION





GENERAL INFORMATION

The Republic of Malta gained its independence from the United Kingdom in 1964 and joined the European Union in 2004, along with the other Mediterranean island-state Cyprus and eight Central and Eastern European countries. With a surface of 315km² counting roughly 430.000 inhabitants, the insular country is the EU's smallest Member State. The Republic of Malta has a parliamentary system. Current Prime Minister is Joseph Muscat (Labour Party), who assumed office in 2013. The current President, who fulfils mainly representative functions, is Marie Louise Coleiro Preca (Labour Party). The country is subdivided into five regions, with each region having its own committee. The parliament is unicameral; the House of Representatives consists of 69 members. Official languages are Maltese and English. Six MEPs represent Malta in the European Parliament. Maltese EU Commissioner Karmenu Vella is responsible for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries.

ECONOMY

Malta has a very import- and export-dependent market economy. Hence, global developments are particularly noticeable because of the openness and the small size of the national economy. Since the beginnings of foreign direct investment in Malta in the 1960s, the Maltese economy has experienced a continuous structural change. Malta's economy is based on high-quality production and services and is characterised by the presence of a very large, mainly internationally-oriented financial sector. Other key sectors are tourism, online gambling, the pharmaceutical industry, information and communication technology, as well as aircraft maintenance and the maritime economy.

The GDP was €8.8 billion in 2015, amounting to €20.450 per capita, making Malta a high-income country. GDP growth is very strong with a rate of 6.2% in 2015. As a result of its robust economic performance, Malta's

GDP per capita is projected to reach 97% of the EU average in 2017. The overall unemployment rate is at roughly 5% and is expected to remain broadly unchanged in the coming years. A significant part of jobs in Malta are dependent on tourism. The EU sees further potential in Malta's economic development by stepping up measures to ensure the long-term sustainability of public finances and by taking measures to strengthen labour supply, notably through increased participation of low-skilled persons in lifelong learning.

Malta's most important trading partners are Germany and France (exports) as well as Italy, the Netherlands and UK (imports). The general government budget deficit has decreased in recent years thanks to strong revenue growth and remains stable below the 3% threshold. Malta's credit rating is positively rated by Standard & Poor's (i.e. A). In 2008 Malta joined the Eurozone.



PRIORITIES

MIGRATION

The first priority of the Maltese Presidency will be to tackle the current migratory crisis. Here, Malta wants to ensure the implementation of decisions that have already been agreed upon (e.g. relocation of 160.000 refugees within the EU). The Maltese Presidency will place migration on top of the political agenda and pursue further progress in the current political agenda, such as the revision of the Dublin Regulation.

THE SINGLE MARKET

The Maltese Presidency wants to ensure that the Single Market can be fully exploited. The Single Market, the "Union's greatest asset", shall be extended to develop the Digital Single Market, as well as to complete the Internal Energy Market. The Capital Markets Union will also remain on the agenda. In order to mobilise private capital, the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) will be extended in time and financial capacity. The Maltese Presidency will also push forward Juncker's announcement to provide free Wi-Fi in major cities (Wifi4all).

SECURITY

The Maltese Presidency will continue previous Presidencies' work on proposals that address regional and global challenges, in order to enhance the security of EU citizens. For that, diplomacy is the main tool. Malta is committed to work closely together with the European External Action Service to address the challenges of migration, terrorism and hybrid threats under the umbrella of the EU's Global Strategy.

SOCIAL INCLUSION

The Maltese Presidency wants to draw from its experience and expertise in social dialogue and improve social inclusion in the EU. The Presidency will work hand in hand with social partners, civil society and citizens in order to advance gender equality and rights of minorities and vulnerable groups. To this end, Malta will hold a Ministerial Level Conference on LGBTIQ rights. Malta will also continue the efforts to combat gender-based violence, by promoting the sharing of best practices and exchange of information.

EUROPE'S NEIGHBOURHOOD

The Maltese Presidency will support ongoing efforts to stabilise EU's neighbourhood. With reference to the EU Global Strategy, Malta will contribute to ensure a successful democratic transition in Tunisia. Particular attention will also be paid to the stabilisation of Libya and to the conflict in Syria. Support for Ukraine will continue, while also seeking cooperation with Russia on issues of global and regional concern.

MARITIME

As an island-state, Malta will also pay special attention to maritime issues. The EU Integrated Maritime Policy will be reinforced, and the sustainability and continuing development of the maritime sector ensured. In early 2017, the Western Mediterranean Sea Basin Strategy will be launched. International Ocean Governance will also be a relevant item on the agenda, in order to improve the governance framework and the sustainability of the oceans.



WHO IS WHO

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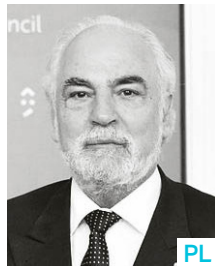
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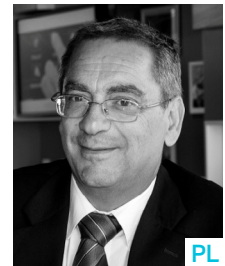
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POLICY FIELDS

INTERNAL MARKET AND INDUSTRY

The finalisation of the Digital Single Market will be the focus of the activities of the Maltese Presidency in the area of Industry and Internal Market. To this end, the Presidency will continue the work of its predecessor on cutting down roaming charges throughout Europe and make progress on ending unjustified geoblocking within the EU. Other aspects include the mobilisation of private investment and the upcoming package for services. The Presidency will also work towards the enhancement of the business environment for SMEs, for example by enabling a wider range of funding sources as part of the Capital Markets Union.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

In the area of research and innovation, the Presidency's work will be focused on the priorities of the European Research Area and on making progress in the PRIMA initiative for strengthening cooperation on sustainable food production and water with neighbouring countries in the Mediterranean. The Presidency will also improve monitoring and reporting in research. The Space Strategy

for Europe will also feature high on the agenda, in order to maintain Europe's strategic autonomy in space.

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

In the field of justice and home affairs, the Maltese Presidency will focus on citizens' rights. It will take forward ongoing proposals relevant to consumers and businesses, such as the supply of digital content and contract rules for the online sales of goods. The Presidency will also start discussions on the proposal on business insolvency to provide businesses with tools to be rescued and honest entrepreneurs to be given a second chance. Other aspects will include proposals relating to the harmonisation of money laundering criminal offences and sanctions, as well as the strengthening of mutual recognition of criminal assets' freezing and confiscation orders.

EDUCATION, YOUTH AND SPORT

When it comes to education, the Maltese Presidency will focus on the implementation of the New Skills Agenda for Europe, in order to ensure a high-quality education for all, while promoting inclusion and diversity

at the same time. Other aspects will include the work on the European Qualifications and Europass Framework, the mid-term review of the European Youth Strategy, as well as the implementation of the main recommendations of previous youth conferences. In the field of sport, the Presidency will focus on the role of sport for social inclusion, including voluntary work and on further developing the EU Work Plan on Sport.

CULTURE AND AUDIOVISUAL

The Maltese Presidency will prioritise the work on the audiovisual media services directive. It will also work towards extending the entitlement period of EU-Korea audiovisual agreements and continue work on deepening international cultural relations. Further, the Presidency will enter into negotiations with the European Parliament on a decision on the European Year of Cultural Heritage (2018) and on the European Capitals of Culture for 2020 and 2033.

TRANSPORT

The Maltese Presidency will give all modes of transport the same importance when it comes to policy work. Within maritime and air



>> POLICY FIELDS

transport, the Passenger Ship Legislation and European Aviation Safety (EASA) regulation will feature high on the agenda. Concerning land transport, the Presidency will focus on a review of the directive on the initial training qualification and periodic training for professional drivers and a revision of the regulation on rail passenger rights. Smart mobility and how to reduce congestion and pollution will also be on the agenda, as well as the integration of satellite facilities (e.g. Copernicus) to support public authorities in the implementation of measures related to transport.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

With regards to telecommunications, the Maltese Presidency intends to conclude the discussions with the European Parliament on the decision on the use of 470 to 790 MHz frequency band in the Union. It will also give priority to the conclusion of the wholesale roaming review files. Further, Malta will focus on the European Electronic Communication Code (ECC), which will indeed constitute the bulk of the work during the Presidency. In addition to this, the Maltese Presidency intends to pursue the conclusion of the regulation on the cross border parcel delivery services and the regulation

on the promotion of Internet connectivity in local communities and public spaces (Wifi4all initiative).

ENERGY

With regards to energy, the Maltese Presidency will give priority to files which have not yet been concluded, including the Gas Security of Supply Regulation and the Regulation for Energy Labelling of Products. Further, Malta will start the discussions on all eight legislative components of the recently presented Winter Package with a special focus on the Energy Efficiency and the Energy Performance in Buildings Directives. The Presidency aims to reach a general approach on these directives by the June Energy Council. Another focus of the Maltese Presidency will be Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the energy field, an aspect to be featured in the the Euro-Med Conference, taking place in Valletta on 18-19 May 2017.

HEALTH

The Presidency's priorities in the field of health will be cross-border cooperation and drug-pricing, concretely accessibility and affordability of medicines. Concerning the first priority, Malta intends to make the cross-border healthcare system more streamlined and user-friendly, including more

equity of services across the EU, in order to make mobility of patients within the EU easier. The Presidency also wants to ensure that an increasing number of citizens benefit from centres of excellence across Europe. With regards to drug-pricing, the Presidency aims at achieving more transparency in the way pharmaceutical companies negotiate with purchasing authorities and establish prices.

AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

Climate change will feature high not only on the environmental agenda of the Maltese Presidency, but also in the field of agriculture. During an informal Council meeting on 21-23 May in Valletta, the Presidency will hold a discussion on the impact of climate change on agriculture and on adaptation measures that can be implemented to minimise its negative effects. With regards to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), Malta will focus on how to incentivise farm innovation and sustainable production. It will also continue working on the CAP simplification and reducing bureaucracy for farmers and national administrators. On environment, Malta intends to make further progress in the Circular Economy Package, especially concerning negotiations on the waste directives.





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