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Priorities of the Maltese EU Council Presidency

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Report Highlights:

On January 1, 2017, Malta took over the rotating EU Presidency. This report provides an overview of the Maltese Presidency's priorities for the next six months.

Priorities of the Maltese EU Council Presidency

On January 1, 2017, Malta, the smallest European Union (EU) Member State, took over the rotating EU Council Presidency for the first time ever. For the next six months, Malta will schedule and chair all ministerial meetings with the exception of the Foreign Affairs Council. The Maltese Presidency has identified [six priority dossiers](#): implementation of the political agenda on migration, the single market, ensuring the security of EU citizens, advancing on social inclusion, Europe's neighborhood policy and the sustainable development of the maritime sector. Malta concludes the [current Trio of Presidencies](#) with the Netherlands and Slovakia and will work with Estonia, Bulgaria and Austria to develop a program for the next Trio of Presidencies.

The Maltese Presidency will have to deal with strong anti-EU sentiments during its stint. The formal Brexit process may be triggered during its Presidency and national elections are expected in the Netherlands, France and Germany. These Member States may be reluctant to take EU-related decisions that could impact the results of the national elections. A radical change in these governments would heavily alter Member States' positions in EU negotiations and decision-making.

Agriculture

Malta will lead talks on how the **Common Agricultural Policy** (CAP) can encourage farm innovation and support more sustainable climate-friendly production in order to achieve food security and agricultural development goals. The Maltese Presidency will also aim at reaching a balanced EU position on **protecting and sustainably managing forests** and present this position at the United Nations Forum on Forests in New York in May 2017. At the Agriculture Council in December 2016, Malta as incoming Presidency stressed the need for Member States to finally decide on how to move forward with the proposal for a new **organic production** regulation. Negotiations on the Commission proposal, presented in March 2014, ended in deadlock because Member States disagree on setting decertification thresholds for pesticide residues.

Maritime Sector

The Maltese Presidency intends to work towards an integrated maritime EU policy. It will also seek political endorsement for the [“Joint Communication for the International Ocean Governance”](#) published in November 2016 and support the “Western Mediterranean Sea Basin Initiative” expected to be launched early 2017.

Renewable Energy

The Maltese Presidency will lead the initial debates on the level of EU-wide targets for renewable energy. It will also lead the discussions on the future of biofuels and other alternative fuels in order to establish a basis for future consensus before entering negotiations with the European Parliament.

Agenda

The provisional calendar of meetings under the Maltese Presidency can be downloaded from the Council's website at <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15722-2016-INIT/en/pdf>.

Agriculture and Fisheries Council Meetings:

- January 23, 2017 (Brussels): Commission report on the implementation of the milk package
- March 6, 2017 (Brussels): Future of the CAP, food supply chain
- April 3-4, 2017 (Luxembourg): Commission report on the implementation of the ecological focus areas, EU budget
- June 12-13 (Luxembourg): Communication from the Commission on fishing opportunities for 2018

Environment Council Meetings:

- February 28, 2017 (Brussels): EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy
- June 19, 2017 (Luxembourg): Reporting greenhouse gas emissions

Links

- Maltese Presidency website: <https://www.eu2017.mt/en/Pages/Maltese-Priorities.aspx>
- Council of the European Union: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/presidency-council-eu/>
- European Parliament briefing "Priority dossiers under the Maltese EU Council Presidency": [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/595854/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)595854_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/595854/EPRS_BRI(2016)595854_EN.pdf)