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NOTE

From:	The Maltese delegation
To:	Council
Subject:	Work programme of the incoming Presidency - Information from the Maltese delegation

On 1 January 2017, Malta will proudly assume the rotating Presidency of the Council from the Slovak Republic. This will put Malta in a front and centre position during this unique time in the history of the European Union.

As an island nation with no physical links to mainland Europe, Malta is sensitive towards the benefits that connectivity and digitalisation can bring about. The dawn of the digital age has ushered in an era filled with new opportunities which were unimaginable even up to a few years ago creating growth and jobs. It is therefore paramount that we endeavour not only to complete the Digital Single Market but will also strive to ensure that whatever we achieve is fit for purpose not only for the present but for the years to come.

The upcoming development of 5G technology must find us all prepared. This is an opportunity for Europe to be at the forefront of technological prowess. A digitized and connected Europe can bring about great opportunities for all. The intentions of the European Commission in this regard are welcomed by Malta and we will strive to work together with all parties to ensure the maximum benefit to our citizens and businesses alike.

In this context, and in close collaboration both with our trio partners and the upcoming trio, Malta is endeavouring to embark upon a realistically ambitious agenda for its Presidency. The Maltese Presidency will continue to build upon the invaluable work done by our Dutch and Slovak trio partners and ensure that the upcoming trio will have strong foundations.

To this end, during the first months of the Presidency, Malta intends to conclude the discussions with the European Parliament on the **Decision on the use of the 470-790MHz frequency band in the Union**. The negotiations undertaken by the Slovak Presidency will serve as a solid basis for this undertaking. We believe that an agreement on this file will strongly help the European Union to embark on the ambitious journey towards the creation of a fully functioning Gigabit society based on 5G deployment throughout Europe.

The Maltese Presidency will give top priority to the conclusion of the **wholesale roaming review** file. Malta would like to, first and foremost, thank the Slovak Presidency for the great effort that it has put into reaching a General Approach. Whilst Malta believes that the agreement reached earlier today is satisfactory, it is also cognisant of the joint statement by Member States and the discussions surrounding the issue. Malta is aware of the notable differences in position between the Council and the European Parliament and of the impact that the Fair Use Policy decision will have on the negotiations of the final agreement. In this context, the Maltese Presidency would like to reassure all Member States that we will be taking a transparent and honest approach to the negotiations with the European Parliament. Malta believes that both positions will serve as a good starting point in the process of achieving a truly roaming free Europe without any extra undue burdens on all of our citizens.

The work on the **European Electronic Communications Code (ECC)** will constitute the bulk of the work during the Maltese Presidency. The work on the ECC is undoubtedly of great importance and the Maltese Presidency believes that having an updated framework for the telecommunications sector which is capable of dealing with the upcoming challenges and developments within the digital world is of paramount importance. To this end, the Maltese Presidency intends to start working in earnest on the Code. Malta believes that delivering a new framework based on increased connectivity and clear rules will be essential. We will strive to advance on the Code as much as possible with the view of revisiting the progress in the Telecoms Council on 9 June 2017.

The Maltese Presidency also 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** (WiFi4EU). The Maltese Presidency will aim to reach a political agreement on these dossiers. In both cases we would like to thank the Slovak Presidency for its efforts on the files. We now wait for the European Parliament to push forward with its timetable in order to reach a timely conclusion on these files.

The Maltese Presidency also awaits the publication of the initiatives on free flow of data and e-privacy by the European Commission before proceeding any further.

The Maltese Presidency will also coincide with the two year anniversary of the launch of the Digital Single Market Strategy. During our Presidency we will take stock of the ongoing legislative files in the Digital Single Market Strategy.

Malta intends to make this Presidency a success for all of Europe. If we, collectively, manage to fully exploit the Digital Single Market we will bring tangible benefits to our economies, our businesses and our families by removing barriers to trade and improving protection and access to services for consumers.
