

21.11.2016

Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Louis Grech presents the priorities of the Maltese Presidency

The Deputy Prime Minister said that the Maltese Presidency should be one bringing tangible results in areas that truly make a difference to European citizens.

Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Louis Grech believes that the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union will start the process restoring the citizens' trust in the EU. Mr. Grech said that the Maltese Presidency should serve as a starting point for the European project to be sustained in a viable way.

Together with Slovakia and the Netherlands, Malta agreed to a strategic agenda promoting economic growth, sustainability and employment; ensuring competitiveness; citizen protection; unity in energy for the EU; improvements in climate; security, justice and liberty. These unite the European Union as a chief global actor. Mr. Grech pointed out that this strategic agenda helped form the priorities that Malta will be working on during the Presidency, in a couple of weeks.

The work programme is formed by the main priorities which include migration, the internal market, security, social inclusion, the neighbourhood policy and the maritime sector.

These six priorities were discussed last week when the Maltese Cabinet was attending meetings in Brussels with the Presidents of the three European Institutions to discuss the main themes that will characterise the European Agenda from January to June next year. The fundamental priorities are intended to guide Europe in the current unstable background.

Mr. Grech recalled the fact that it's the first time that Malta will be hosting the Presidency of the Council of the EU. He further noted that this will be both a challenge and an opportunity for us as a nation. Mr. Grech stated that the first six months of 2017 will be an opportunity for Malta and its citizens to prove that even the smallest member state of the Union can contribute to its prosperity, peace and security.

Mr. Grech further explained that, faced with the issue of migration, Malta needs to enhance and simplify the Common European Asylum System, that will lead to a fair distribution of the load between the Member States.

21.11.2016

In regards to the single market and the single digital market, Malta will strengthen the services market by addressing the issue of unjustified geoblocking and by removing roaming charges in Europe, a measure which should bring about a real change in peoples' lives.

In the backdrop of security in Europe, Mr. Grech expressed the view that significant progress must be registered in order to improve how the Union's external borders are managed, including the establishment of a European system for the registration of third-country nationals.

With regards to social inclusion, Mr. Grech stated that we should prioritise work being carried out on the development of the European Social Pillar by addressing the ever changing issues of the job market and thus enhancing convergence in Europe in this regard. He further added that we should ensure that women throughout Europe have full access to the labour market, that the issue of gender-based violence is better addressed and that gender balance is improved in the assignment of certain job titles.

The Deputy Prime Minister stated that in light of the growing instability beyond Europe's borders, the Maltese Presidency will focus on spreading democracy and security in the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods, with a particular attention to stabilising and unifying Libya.

In the maritime sector, Mr. Grech held the view that we need to promote the better governance of our oceans, in particular that of the Southern Mediterranean basin.

During his intervention, the Parliamentary Secretary for the Presidency 2017 and EU funds, Dr. Ian Borg explained the selection procedure of the logo that will be representing the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2017. He explained how, some time ago, a generation of young visual artists and graphic designers were given the opportunity to attend the MCAST Art & Design Institute. From a total of 29 drawings, the concept of Alexia Muscat, showing the Maltese Cross was chosen. The emblem represents our nation and recalls the courage, loyalty and perseverance of our people. Dr. Borg explained how the logo was penned out again with shapes and symbols that represent some of the Maltese cultural traditions – especially the grain windmills, luzzu, tile making and the traditional Maltese door knob.

The Parliamentary Secretary thanked all the MCAST students and teachers that rallied behind this idea with willingness and enthusiasm. He concluded that during Malta's time at the helm of the Presidency of the Council, we need to look back at what we have already achieved as a continent due to the celebration of the 60th anniversary from the signing of the Treaties of Rome - the first step towards the establishment of the European Union as we know it today.

The Deputy Prime Minister remarked that together with the six priorities of the Maltese Presidency there will be discussions with regards to negotiations on the European Budget for 2018-2020, where investments in important sectors such as migration and European Union External Policy might be needed.

21.11.2016

Mr. Grech was clear in his statement that Malta will keep up with the Presidency's work, even during the Brexit negotiation which might result in great challenges and complexities in the agenda of the Maltese Presidency. He stated that with a good sense of leadership and strong vision, the European Union will become stronger and more vibrant.

The Deputy Prime Minister said that the Maltese Presidency should be one bringing tangible results in areas that truly make a difference to European citizens. Mr Grech concluded that "the opportunity before us will show that although we are a small country with limited resources, facing major challenges, I believe that this will be an opportunity to show our maturity as a nation".



21.11.2016



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/eu2017mt/31123766876/in/album-72157675458927640/>
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/eu2017mt/30352341143/in/album-72157675458927640/>
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/eu2017mt/30352347803/in/album-72157675458927640/>