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Parliamentary Dimension

Background Note

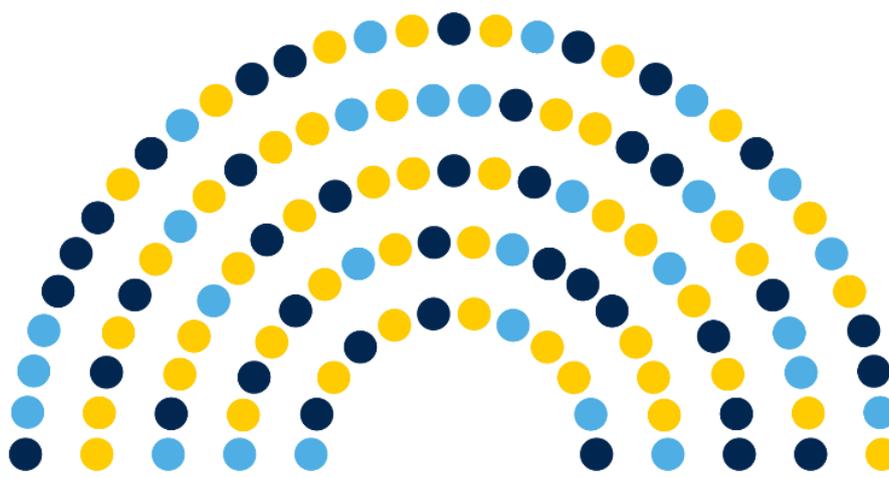
Session I

Priorities of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union

COSAC Chairpersons' Meeting

11 January 2020

Portugal



BACKGROUND NOTE

Session I

Priorities of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union

On 1 January 2021, Portugal holds the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) for a six-month period for the fourth time, as part of the Trio Presidency with Germany and Slovenia.

In addition to the priorities taken by the Trio Presidency in its [18-month programme](#), each Presidency defines its [specific priorities](#), and Portugal has set three major priorities, in line with the objectives of the Union's Strategic Agenda, towards a **resilient, social and global Europe** and based on five lines of action:

- Promoting recovery and resilience, cohesion and the European values;
- Promoting the EU as a leader in climate action;
- Speeding up the digital transformation at the service of citizens and businesses;
- Enhancing and strengthening the European social model;
- Promoting the EU as a global player.

Resilient Europe – Promoting a European recovery leveraged by the climate and digital transitions

The European economic recovery will play a fundamental role under the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union as a response to the current crisis with a view to sustainable growth and job creation.

Thus, by combining the next [Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 \(MFF\)](#) and the recovery package composed of the [Next Generation EU recovery instrument](#) and the [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#), the Presidency will seek to strengthen the cohesion of economic, social and territorial policies and strengthen the crisis management system at European level.

Within this framework, its task will be to ensure that the rules relating to those instruments are approved and to manage their process of ratification by the Member States, as well as to ensure that the Union members submit their recovery plans.

In this context, free and universal vaccination of Europeans against Covid-19 is one of the challenges that the Portuguese Presidency will face, as a rapid and effective response to the pandemic contributes to a faster and more robust economic and social recovery.

It will also seek to promote the European Union's resilience concerning the defence of its fundamental values, the promotion of the rule of law and its democratic values, the fight against any form of discrimination and disinformation, as well as to foster the digital and climate transitions.

In this context, as far as climate action is concerned, the European Union should take a leading role by adapting to the effects of climate change and promoting the benefits of decarbonisation and economic resilience models, making up the implementation of the [European Green Deal](#), the reform of the [Common Agricultural Policy](#) and the new [EU Forest Strategy](#), which are priorities of the Portuguese Presidency, as well as the commitment to the blue economy and the sustainable use of ocean resources.

Likewise, the digital transition, as a driver of economic recovery and fostering the EU's role in leading innovation and the digital economy, will be one of the objectives of the Portuguese Presidency, given the need to stimulate the development of digital skills, in order to adapt workers to telework, including in public administration, and the transformation of business models and digital platforms, e-commerce, payments and taxes, health and distance learning.

The Presidency will promote the use of digital solutions and strategies for the digital transition across different areas of society as well as technological solutions that ensure a fair and competitive economy, based on democratic values.

With regard to the Conference on the Future of Europe, the Portuguese Presidency will help to make it an opportunity for debate, involving citizens and civil society, on the

results of European policies, also seeking to monitor the negotiation of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum.

Social Europe – Delivering on the Social Pillar of the European Union as a key element to ensure a fair and inclusive climate and digital transition

Addressing the social consequences of the pandemic is one of the objectives of the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union. Strengthening dialogue with social partners and citizens in areas such as employment, equal opportunities, inclusion and diversity, social protection and health plays a central role.

In this context, the Presidency's goals include reinforcing the European social model, mitigating the effects of unemployment, fighting poverty, social exclusion and inequalities, ensuring harmony between generations, a better future for young Europeans and greater well-being for all, while respecting gender equality and non-discrimination.

This priority also includes a dimension of strengthening social cohesion, under which the Presidency plans to hold a Social Summit¹, to debate the social dimension of the regeneration and development of the European economy, as well as the digital and climate transitions, and further the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

In this sense, the Portuguese Presidency will promote the discussion of topics such as the [new “child guarantee”](#), the [regulatory directive on a European framework for minimum wages](#), [the reinforced youth guarantee](#), a new political approach to ageing issues and, finally, the [European Health Union](#).

¹ Within the scope of the Presidency priorities listed, and alongside this initiative, several [events](#) are also planned (information available at <https://www.2021portugal.eu/en/events/>).

Global Europe – External agenda, geopolitical balance and relations with Africa

Strengthening the role of the European Union as a world leader means deepening multilateralism for peace and security, combating climate change and promoting innovation and research, as well as closer relations with international actors such as the US and India.

In this context, the Portuguese Presidency will seek to encourage the development of a strategic cooperation model based on international partnerships in areas such as health and education.

It will also seek to prioritise the establishment of a partnership on the Union's future relations with the United Kingdom and bilateral and multilateral trade agreements.

Relations with Africa will also play a central role during the Presidency, and cooperation between these two actors is essential to address global challenges such as maintaining peace and security, the energy transition, trade, population flows and health crises.

