



Danish Presidency priorities as presented in EP committees

General

The priorities of Denmark's Presidency of the EU Council of Ministers are being presented to European Parliament committees by Danish ministers at meetings on 23-26 January. This compilation will be updated daily during this week.

International trade

The EU's international trade policy, should focus on achieving immediate export and investment gains, so as to generate growth and jobs, rather than on long-term and strategic projects such as the WTO Doha negotiations, Trade and Investment Minister Pia Olsen Dyhr told the International Trade Committee on 25 January.

As specific priorities, Ms Dyhr listed getting better market access for EU exports to Brazil, Russia, India and China, making progress in negotiating a free trade agreement with India, and starting negotiations for another with Japan. She added that the Presidency would also give priority to bilateral trade talks with Canada, Columbia, China and Singapore.

Several MEPs thought Ms Dyhr's plans "very ambitious", noting that trade negotiations with India, Japan, and Columbia were especially difficult and questioning whether the EU should enter into agreements that might prove detrimental to its own manufacturers, the environment or human rights.

Mrs Dyhr replied that focusing on "green growth" was an overall priority and pledged that the Presidency would not forget the EU's responsibility to ensure fairness in global trade, adding that "the EU will benefit from seeing trade and environment in connection".

In the chair: Vital Moreira (S&D, PT)

Women's rights and gender equality

The Presidency should be a catalyst for progress in the areas of women's under-representation on company boards, gender equality (in education and elsewhere) and combating violence against women Manu Sareen, Minister for Gender Equality and Ecclesiastical Affairs told the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee on 25 January.

Employment Minister Mette Frederiksen cited equal pay for women, boosting female participation in the labour market and reducing gender segregation of jobs as priorities. Another goal is unblocking the "maternity leave" dossier.

Committee members voiced concerns about the challenges of active ageing, getting more women into "green" jobs, reducing the male/female pension gap and increasing the share of women in decision-making positions, e.g. by introducing quotas.

In the chair: Mikael Gustafsson (GUE/NGL, SE)

Legal affairs

Press release

Unblocking the EU patent file, stuck in the Council over the choice of the patent court seat, is "vital for innovation in the EU" and a priority for the Presidency, Justice Minister Morten Boskov and Business and Growth Minister Ole Sohn told the Legal Affairs Committee on 25 January. The Ministers also highlighted the directive on annual accounts, which aims "to make companies more responsible" and the regulation on cross-border successions, upon which there is already a limited agreement between Parliament and the Council.

In the chair: Klaus-Heiner Lehne (EPP, DE)

Constitutional affairs

An international "fiscal compact is the only possible way forward", European Affairs Minister Nicolai Wammen told the Constitutional Affairs Committee on 25 January.

Mr Wammen also reminded MEPs that Parliament would have to vote on a protocol to the Charter of Fundamental Rights, agreed by the European Council in 2009 for the Czech Republic. Unless the Czech government asks otherwise, "we need to deliver what we promised (...) whether we like it or not", he said.

In the chair: Carlo Casini (EPP, IT)

Internal market

"Financial consolidation and growth are the two legs that should carry Europe forward", Business and Growth Minister Ole Sohn told the Internal Market Committee on 25 January. Mr Sohn underlined the importance of the Single Market Act and said that the Presidency aims to get results on as many of the 12 key initiatives as possible.

He added that the modernisation of Public Procurement, Standardisation, Alternative and Online Dispute Resolution and Recognition of Professional Qualifications would all be high on the agenda, and that the Presidency hoped to be able to reach first-reading agreements on the Roaming III regulation and customs enforcement of intellectual property rights.

In the chair: Malcolm Harbour (ECR, UK)

Industry, research and energy

The Energy Efficiency Directive is a top legislative priority for the Danish Presidency, Minister for Climate, Energy and Buildings Martin Lidegaard told the Industry, Research and Energy Committee on 25 January. This directive will become a "driver for Europe's economic recovery", he said.

Other priorities include further modernising energy infrastructure, the Energy Roadmap 2050, the Low-Carbon Economy Roadmap, the regulation on the safety of offshore oil and gas extraction and the legislative proposal to create an information exchange mechanism with regard to inter-governmental agreements in energy field.

The Single Market Act is also a key priority, Business and Growth Minister Ole Sohn told the committee on 25 January, adding that the Digital Single Market and Digital Agenda are of special interest for EU's "financial consolidation and growth". A first-reading agreement on Roaming Regulation III will probably be reached under this Presidency, whilst the Connecting Europe Facility, the directive on access to public data and clarifying ENISA's future are also important priorities.

Press release

Horizon 2020, the EU research and innovation framework programme for 2014-2020, is a key legislative priority, Research, Innovation and Higher Education Minister Morten Østergaard told the committee on 24 January. In these challenging times, the Commission proposal is the right way to strengthen research and innovation in order to create growth and jobs, he said.

Other legislative priorities include the European Institute for Innovation and Technology, the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) programme, which aims to help combat climate change and environmental degradation, and Euratom.

In the chair: Amalia Sartori (EPP, IT)

Employment and social affairs

Tackling youth unemployment is a priority for Presidency, Employment Minister Mette Frederiksen and Social Affairs and Integration Minister Karen Haekkerup told the Employment and Social Affairs committee on 25 January. The new European Social Fund (ESF) and European Globalisation Fund (EGF) proposals would play a part in this, they added.

MEPs expressed concern about unemployment across all age groups during the crisis and asked for specific measures to fight it. They also discussed the ministers' other priorities: the posting of workers directive, the Social Change and Innovation programme and changes to the Social Security Coordination regulation.

In the chair: Pervenche Berès (S&D, FR)

Regional policy

The key cohesion policy priority is to take negotiations on the reform package as far as possible, European Affairs Minister Nicolai Wammen told the Regional Development Committee on 25 January. Mr Wammen stressed the cohesion policy is now subject to co-decision and is thus a joint responsibility of Parliament and the Council.

He also tried to dispel the "myth" that Denmark, as net payer, would not be interested in advancing the negotiations and told MEPs that the Presidency intends to move them forward in parallel with the multi-annual financial framework negotiations. He also warned that talks on the cohesion package would not be finalized by the end of the Danish Presidency, but promised to pass clear messages from MEPs on different topics to the Council.

In the chair: Danuta Hübner (EPP, PL)

Fisheries

A "responsible, dynamic, green and safer Europe", well prepared for the future, are the Presidency's top priorities, Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Minister Mette Gjerskov told the Fisheries Committee on 25 January. The Presidency will focus on reforming the common fisheries policy (CFP), which should be incorporated in the EU2020 strategy to ensure "the sustainable management of fisheries resources in the interests of EU citizens".

The Presidency will also focus on updating legislation on the deep-sea fishing effort, the Baltic Sea salmon long-term management plan, and improving the CFP's external dimension so that it obeys "the same principles and standards as in EU waters".

In the chair: Gabriel Mato Adrover (EPP, ES)

Justice and home affairs

Working towards the setting up of a Common European Asylum System is a key Presidency priority, Justice Minister Morten Bødskov told the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee on 25 January. Migration, resettlement, visa policies and a stronger Schengen cooperation are also high on the Danish agenda, he added.

Press release

To combat terrorism and cross-border criminality, the Presidency aims to make progress on the EU Passenger Name Record (PNR) proposal, said Mr Bødskov, adding that the draft EU-US PNR agreement, to be debated in Parliament, "is the best possible result". He also mentioned proposals on explosives, cyber crime, the victims' package and access to documents.

In the chair: Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D, ES)

Foreign Affairs

The Presidency supports the European External Action Service (EEAS), EU enlargement and the European Neighbourhood Policy, Denmark's European Affairs Minister Nicolai Wammen told the Foreign Affairs Committee on 24 January.

He emphasized that a closer relationship between the European Parliament and national parliaments, based on dialogue, is important to both new and older Member States in order to achieve political integration and prosperity.

The Presidency's involvement in these policies will rely on conditionality and merits, and "human rights will be the internal and external guiding principle", Mr Wammen added.

In the chair: Elmar Brok, (EPP, DE)

Agriculture

"Together we shall lay the foundation for the house that is going to be future CAP", Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Minister Mette Gjerskov told the Agriculture Committee on 24 January. The new EU farm policy should be "suited for the future" and tailored to "the changing needs, priorities and expectations of European farmers, citizens and taxpayers".

The Presidency will press for progress on the food quality package, take a closer look at the rise of antimicrobial resistance and start discussion on soon-to-be-introduced proposals on organic production and the new EU animal welfare strategy unveiled by the Commission last week.

In the chair: Paolo de Castro (S&D, IT)

Environment, public health and food safety

The EU should build on the climate deal achieved in Durban with its allies, Danish Climate and Energy Minister Martin Lidegaard told the Environment Committee on 24 January, adding that the draft roadmap to a low-carbon economy is the "key to future climate policy". MEPs stressed the Presidency's "window of opportunity" to promote reform of the Emissions Trading System and support an effective carbon price.

Animal Welfare, CAP reform and CFP reform were the priorities raised by Mette Gjerskov, Danish Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries. Along with acting Health Minister Pia Olsen Dyr, she agreed with MEPs that resistance to antibiotics was a key area for action.

Europe needs to use its resources more efficiently and sustainably, said Environment Minister Ida Auken told Environment Committee MEPs, including her mother, on 24 January. The EU would negotiate in favour of sustainability goals at the Rio+20 summit in June, she added. MEPs called for progress on pending legislation, such as GM crop cultivation rules.

In the chair: Matthias Groote (S&D, DE)

Culture and education

Press release

Combating early school leaving, mobility and improving young people's work skills are the key youth and education priorities, Minister for Children and Education Christine Antorini told the Culture and Education Committee on 24 January. Ms Antorini stressed the need to introduce a benchmark for measuring the impact of training on the mobility and employability of young people.

The Erasmus for all programme will also be a major priority, and negotiations on a name for the programme, and the resources to be allocated to it, will be pursued in the coming months, she added.

Culture Minister Uffe Elbæk said that in the field of culture and sport, the Presidency would focus on the creative Europe programme, digitising Europe's cultural heritage and developing cultural relations outside the EU. Special attention would be paid to sport, and notably combating doping and match fixing, he said.

In the chair: Doris Pack (EPP, DE)

Transport

Former MEP and current Transport Minister Henrik Dam Kristensen told the Transport Committee on 24 January that the Presidency would focus on "added European value" and cross-border infrastructure projects in negotiations on Trans-European Network guidelines and the Connecting Europe Facility proposals.

Mr Kristensen also hoped a compromise deal on the "rail recast" proposals to improve rail connectivity would be reached before the summer and invited MEPs to a youth road safety conference, in June. Some MEPs criticized the Danish priority of favouring cross-border usage of "eco-combines" (larger and heavier vehicles).

Cutting red tape to help EU vessels survive global competition, cracking down on piracy and speeding up the adoption of common international training and qualification rules for seafarers are the Presidency's top priorities for maritime transport, said Business and Growth Minister Ole Sohn.

In the chair: Brian Simpson (S&D, UK)

Economic and monetary affairs

The key priorities are the "two pack" regulations to step up surveillance of budgetary policies and the economic and fiscal surveillance of euro area countries facing serious financial instability, Economic and Interior Affairs Minister Margrethe Vestager told the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee on 23 January.

Other priorities include strengthening economic governance rules, financial crisis management, co-operation on tax matters and energy taxation to meet climate targets. Ms Vestager also stressed the European Parliament's role, not just as a legislator but in promoting co-operation among the EU 27 Member States, the euro area 17 and the future fiscal compact 26.

In the chair: Sharon Bowles (ALDE, UK)