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## The Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union (January to June 2021)

### Covid-19 recovery programme

During the first half of 2021, Portugal holds the rotating Presidency of the Council. Much of the success of the Portuguese Presidency will be defined by the implementation of the COVID-19 recovery programmes, namely the next multiannual budget and the Next

Generation EU recovery fund.

The vaccination plan is another example of how the Presidency will be defined by the success and speed of implementation.

Additionally, some of the final work around the implementation of the trade agreement with the UK needs to be carried out.

Further priorities of the Presidency are the development of the EU's Social Pillar and strategic autonomy. The country's focus on the "Social Europe" becomes clear, with the current political power that is held by the Socialist together with other left-wing parties in Portugal. The relations with the (less powerful) Portuguese president, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa (of the centre-right), are good.

Further below, we wish to go more deeply into the subjects that are important for our sectors, in particular the way in which the Portuguese presidency (see <https://www.2021portugal.eu/en/>) wants to contribute to the realisation of the 'Digital Europe' and the 'Social Europe'.

### Digital Europe

In agreement with the Presidency's aim to focus on inclusion and equality, proper attention will be placed on the development of digital skills and rights. The digital goals of the Portuguese presidency will be (among others):

- to create a European digital identity,
- to promote the implementation of digital best practices, namely with a view to modernising public administration, including through the use of artificial intelligence,
- to ensure cybersecurity across all policy areas, by taking as a reference the new EU Cybersecurity Strategy and further developing one of its main pillars, the new Directive on security of network and information systems (NIS Directive),
- to discuss the need for digital education, distance learning and hybrid and innovative teaching methods,
- to contribute to the digital transformation of the health sector.



## **Social Europe**

'To bolster the European social model' is the underlying goal of the Portuguese Presidency's Social Europe action. It is a theme that the Presidency aims at integrating across all policy areas.

### **As far as the Union's employment and social policy is concerned, Portugal aims at**

- implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights,
- prioritising the new European Strategy on Safety and Health at Work,
- working on Europe's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025,
- discussing the new European Disability Strategy 2021-2030 in April 2021.

### **In particular as regards the Health policy, the Portuguese presidency will**

- aim at the creation of a European Health Union,
- strengthen the European agencies in their ability to coordinate with domestic authorities.

### **In regard to Culture and Education, the presidency wants to**

- build a framework for European education and training areas.

