

Will the Dutch Presidency be overtaken by events?

The free movement of people within the EU – for so long enshrined as a common good – has never been so much in doubt, largely as a result of the major influx of migrants and refugees from the war-torn Middle East.

Does the Schengen zone have a future? Or are we returning to the days when crossing borders in continental Europe requires showing a passport? And just what will the EU look like at the end of 2017?

The UK referendum on its EU membership could take place as early as the Summer, and with Prime Minister David Cameron unlikely to get any real “bang from his buck” in the negotiations with other EU countries, there must be a real fear in Brussels (not to mention The Hague) that the EU risks losing “perfidious Albion” for good.

All of which means that the Dutch Presidency may get overtaken by bigger issues. This is not

to say that they have nothing on their plate – the climate & energy discussions alone will give the most devoted EU federalist a headache – but given the Commission slowdown in lawmaking, the US elections, and a possible “Brexit”, the Dutch Presidency may find that other countries are reluctant to make much progress when there are so many uncertainties on the ground.

Four reasons the Dutch should be worried:

1. UK referendum on EU membership casts doubt on the future of the EU
2. Failure to deal with the migrant crisis is leading to the possible dissolution of Schengen – and the principle of the free movement of people
3. US elections look set to further delay the EU-US trade agreement (“TTIP”)
4. Dispute between UK and Spain over status of Gibraltar airport means that all aviation dossiers are currently at a standstill in the Council

KEY PLAYERS



Prime Minister
MARK RUTTE



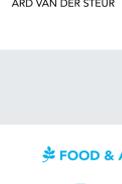
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Social Affairs and Employment
LODEWIJK ASSCHER



Minister of Finance and Head of the Eurogroup
JEROEN DIJSSELBLOEM



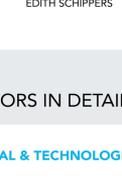
Minister of Economic Affairs
HENK KAMP



Minister of Foreign Affairs
BERT KOENDERS



Minister of Foreign Trade and Development
LILIANNE PLOUMEN



Minister of Defence
HENNIS-PLASSCHAERT



Minister for Internal Affairs
RONALD PLASTERK



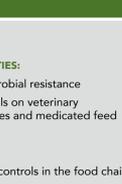
Minister of Safety and Justice
ARD VAN DER STEUR



Minister of Education, Culture, and Science
JET BUSSEMAKER



Minister of Health, Wellbeing, and Sport
EDITH SCHIPPERS



Minister for Transport and Environment
MELANIE VAN HAEGEN

5 KEY SECTORS IN DETAIL

- FOOD & AGRICULTURE
- DIGITAL & TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION
- HEALTH
- ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT
- TRANSPORT

FOOD & AGRICULTURE

WATCH THIS SPACE:
In the food and agriculture sectors, the Dutch Presidency will have to tackle a limited but very controversial set of issues.

KEY CONTACTS TO ENGAGE & INFORM:
SABINE JUELICHER New Director for Safety in the Food Chain
XAVIER PRATS MONNÉ Director General, DG SANTE
EDITH SCHIPPERS Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport, the Netherlands

PRIORITIES:

- Antimicrobial resistance
- Proposals on veterinary medicines and medicated feed
- Cloning
- GMOs
- Official controls in the food chain

ANALYSIS

With the EU Action Plan on **ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE** due to expire at the end of 2016, the Presidency will put a strong focus on the issue, especially for farm animals. One of the key issues will be how to restrict the use of antibiotics for farm animals, especially the so-called “preventive use” before the animal is actually sick. The Dutch Presidency will be expected to seal a deal quickly.

CLONING is another sensitive subject the Dutch will have to deal with. The proposal from the Commission prohibits the cloning of animals for food supply in the EU, but does not address the issue of food from the descendants of cloned animals. The Parliament voted last autumn to extend the ban to clones’ descendants, but the Council has yet to agree on a position.

In terms of **NUTRITION**, the Dutch Presidency will focus on food products improvements and the lowering of fat, salt and sugar contents of

food. Food reformulation and innovation will be key components of the strategy the Netherlands will roll out in the framework of the Platform for Action on Diet, Physical activity and Health. The Presidency will also deal with the follow up actions to the trans-fat report and assess next steps for better information and protection of consumers on this topic.

GMOS will most likely remain a major headache for the Dutch Presidency. The proposal from the Commission to give States more freedom to restrict, or prohibit the marketing of GMOs in food or feed on their territory has come under fire from all sides including the Parliament, civil society and third countries. The fate of the draft proposal will depend on the position of the Council. The Presidency will also try to reach agreement on the **OFFICIAL CONTROLS** proposal which lays out rules for how Member States should carry out controls in the food chain.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

FOOD & AGRI	FOOD & AGRI	FOOD & AGRI	FOOD & AGRI
15 February	14 March	11-12 April	27-28 June
Foreign Affairs Council, Agriculture/Fisheries Council	Foreign Affairs Council, Agriculture/Fisheries Council	Agriculture/Fisheries Council	Agriculture/Fisheries Council

DIGITAL & TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

WATCH THIS SPACE:
Much to the satisfaction of the outgoing Luxembourgish Presidency, EU data protection and cyber-security reforms were firmly wrapped up by the time the Dutch took office on 1 January. Although the new Presidency will take charge of the administrative loose ends, it will focus mainly on upcoming legislative reforms under the Commission’s Digital Single Market Strategy, namely harmonising rules on the e-sale of tangible goods and digital content, and enhancing content portability (i.e. banning geo-blocking) under broader copyright reform.

KEY CONTACTS TO ENGAGE & INFORM:
GERAN KAAI Data Protection
HERBERT KRAJENBRINK Telecoms
TJADE STROBAND Competitiveness

Note: All three of these contacts belong to the Dutch Representation to the EU

PRIORITIES:

The Dutch are also expected to coordinate the Member States’ “discussions” on three politically contentious issues:

- Platform regulation (to legislate or not to legislate?)
- Telecoms reform (the Netherlands were firmly behind an outright, EU-wide ban on zero-rating last time around), and
- IPR Enforcement (how liable should intermediaries be for notice and takedown?). Spectrum allocation of the 700 MHz band is also on the radar, but its highly technical nature makes it subject to less political bartering between EU countries.

ANALYSIS

What can we expect from the Dutch Presidency from a digital perspective? Similar to its predecessor, the Netherlands is known to be industry-friendly, fair and forthright, and a broker of compromise between small and larger Member States. It is one of the more progressive voices on digital policy, having a relatively robust domestic

framework, but stands firm until the end when it believes in something (zero-rating a case in point). Its legacy will also lie in its status as the first of the new trio, and implicit ability to influence the upcoming agendas of Slovakia (July-Dec 2016) and Malta (Jan-June 2017).

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

DIGITAL & TECH	DIGITAL & TECH	DIGITAL & TECH	DIGITAL & TECH
29 February	26 May	27 May	27 May
Competitiveness	Competitiveness/ Telecoms	Competitiveness	Competitiveness

EU Digital Digest

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ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

WATCH THIS SPACE:
Following the UN Climate Change Convention in December 2015 in Paris, the Presidency will ensure that energy dossiers keep being seen as key priorities.

1. The Presidency will continue working towards an Energy Union with a “forward-looking climate policy” to guarantee the transition towards a green, low carbon, energy and resource-efficient economy.
2. The implementation of the 2030 energy and climate package will include proposals on the Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) and on emissions reduction in other sectors.
3. The Presidency will work on the implementation of the circular economy package.

KEY CONTACTS TO ENGAGE & INFORM:
MIGUEL ARIAS CANETE Commissioner for Climate Action & Energy
GIOVANNI LA VIA MEP (EPP, Italy) Chair of the European Parliament’s Environment Committee

PRIORITIES:

- Energy Union strategy
- 2030 framework for climate & energy policy
- EU ETS revision
- Transition towards a green, low carbon, energy and resource-efficient economy
- Implementation of the circular economy package
- Review of the energy efficiency framework for products (Energy Labelling Directive)
- Internal Energy Market

ANALYSIS

CIRCULAR ECONOMY The challenging and recycling targets will lead to waste discussions in the Council. The Dutch Presidency strongly supports the package and will push for full implementation. An agreement within the Council is targeted for 20 June.

ETS REVISION The Presidency will push for a complete revision of the European Trading Scheme (ETS), and tough negotiations are expected in the Council. This topic is a highly sensitive as some EU Member States have different levels of dependence on fossil fuels.

WORKING TOWARDS AN ENERGY UNION with a “forward-looking climate policy” The Dutch are strong supporters of the Energy Union strategy and the Presidency will push for strong governance and an increased share of renewables in the EU energy strategy.

The Dutch Presidency will push for an ambitious revision of the **Energy Labelling Framework Directive** and also have to deal with the **National Emission Ceilings Directive**, where the situation in the Council is not yet favourable to a compromise.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

ENERGY & ENV	ENERGY & ENV	ENERGY & ENV	ENERGY & ENV
4 March	3-4 April	6 June	20 June
Environment Council	Inter parliamentary conference on energy	Energy Council	Foreign Affairs/ Environment Council

HEALTH

WATCH THIS SPACE:
The Dutch government may not be keen on EU involvement in health care, but they do believe the EU plays an important role in the market access of pharmaceuticals, and the Presidency will examine how new innovations could reach patients faster whilst keeping a close eye on the sustainability of healthcare systems.

KEY CONTACTS TO ENGAGE & INFORM:
EDITH SCHIPPERS Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport
MARTIN VAN RIJN State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sport

PRIORITIES:

- Access and pricing of new innovation for health
- Antimicrobial resistance
- Dementia
- Health & Safety at Work (with specific focus on cancer)
- Endocrine disruptors
- Medical devices

ANALYSIS

The Dutch will try to reach an agreement with the European Parliament on the two regulations concerning medical devices and in-vitro diagnostic, which are currently in endless trilogue negotiations.

The Netherlands is also at the forefront of new approaches to pricing and reimbursement of pharmaceuticals and medical devices – their agreement with Belgium regarding procurement

of pharmaceuticals might bear fruit in the short term, and the Presidency might want other countries to follow their lead.

On endocrine disruptors, the Dutch will definitely put pressure on the European Commission to develop criteria for identifying these substances, although the ball very much remains in the Commission’s court – for now.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

HEALTH	HEALTH	HEALTH	HEALTH
9-10 February	1-2 March	18 April	9-10 May
Antimicrobial Conference on Antimicrobial Resistance	Expert meeting on Innovation for the benefit of the patient. Early interaction between market authorization, IPR and payer in order to optimize patient access to innovative medicines	Informal meeting of Ministers of Health	Conference: Living well with(out) Dementia
23-25 May	7 June	17 June	
2016: Conference Banning work related cancer in Europe	eHealth week, including High Level Conference on eHealth	ECOFIN/ Health Council	

TRANSPORT

WATCH THIS SPACE:
Enhancing the competitiveness of the EU’s transport sector will be relatively high on the Dutch Presidency’s agenda. The Dutch have promised to strike a deal on the Fourth Railway Package, while the Slovaks and Maltese will be tasked to deal with the Strategy on Road Decarbonisation. The only formal Transport Council meeting under the Dutch Presidency is scheduled in June.

KEY CONTACTS TO ENGAGE & INFORM:
VIOLETA BULC Commissioner for Transport
RICHARD OSSENDORP Transport Counsellor at the Dutch Permanent Representation to the EU

PRIORITIES:

- Rail Status: Agreement finally in sight!
- Aviation Status: Good luck to the European Commission in solving competitiveness issues via bilateral international aviation agreements. Most other issues continue to be blocked in the Council due to the disagreement over the status of Gibraltar Airport.
- Road Status: Tense political climate after VW scandal
- Maritime Status: Relatively empty ports liberalisation proposal will become law

ANALYSIS

RAIL The Dutch say that a deal on the political aspects of the Fourth Railway Package (public service contract, the Single European railway area and accounts of railway undertakings) will be reached by spring 2016.

AVIATION Home to one of Europe’s major hubs (Schiphol), the Dutch will organise the European Aviation Summit on 20-21 January to steer discussions between Ministers, MEPs, and CEOs on the Commission’s recently published Aviation Strategy. In practice however, little progress is expected. The Gibraltar conflict between Spain and the UK is still preventing progress on important legislative files, such as the Single European Sky and the review of the Air Passenger Rights Regulation. The competitiveness of the EU’s aviation sector, and especially competition issues with Gulf airlines and airports, will remain high on the agenda and is likely to be dealt with through bilateral international aviation agreements to be launched in the next six months. It remains to be seen how well Commissioner Bulc’s negotiations will go over the next few months.

ROAD In the wake of the Paris climate agreement, the future proposals on emissions reduction in the transport sector will prove challenging for the Dutch. The Presidency will also have to deal with the very public aftermath of the VW emission scandal. The introduction of so-called real

driving emissions (RDE) come for emissions by diesel cars is due to enter into force in 2016. However, MEPs have voiced concerns that the agreed limits are much weaker than originally expected and are expected to veto the proposal for new limits in January which will risk further delaying the introduction of new limits even longer. Finally, the Commission’s strategy for the decarbonisation of Transport, expected in the first half of 2016, is sure to be a hot topic amongst policymakers in Brussels throughout 2016 and beyond. The Netherlands wants to explore the potential for driverless cars and will carry out various tests on driverless trucks during their Presidency, although European cooperation on this matter still seems a long way off.

MARITIME Following two failed attempts to liberalise Europe’s ports in 2001 and 2004, the Dutch will have the unenviable task of leading the latest charge, which this time excludes cargo handling and passenger services. This reform deals mainly with market access to port services and financial transparency of ports. The Presidency expects to reach an agreement with the European Parliament during its mandate but will also have to take into account the concerns raised by the Port of Rotterdam Authority and the association of ports industries regarding the proposal to appoint an independent supervisor for ports in every Member State.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

TRANSPORT	TRANSPORT	TRANSPORT	TRANSPORT
20 January	14-16 April	7 June	7 June
Aviation Summit	Informal Transport Council	Transport Council	Transport Council

EU COUNCIL PRESIDENCY ROTATION



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The Dutch are known for their excellent English, but a little Dutch can go a long way in showing respect and securing that valuable piece of information. Below we list some key phrases that can get your foot in the door:

- Hello, am I speaking to...
Hallo, spreek ik met...
- Can I speak to...
Kan ik met ...spreken
- Is Mr or Mrs ... available now?
Is meneer/mevrouw...nu beschikbaar?
- I would like to set up a meeting/ event :
Ik zou graag een vergadering/ evenement organiseren.
- What are the next steps in the future of...
Wat zouden de volgende stappen in de toekomst zijn?
- Is there anything new to report on?
Is er iets nieuws te melden?
- How will matters progress from here on?
Hoe zullen de zaken lopen verder lopen?