

OUTLOOK:

POLAND'S PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

INTRODUCTION

As Poland takes over the Presidency of the Council of Ministers – the first in a trio including Denmark and Cyprus – the war in Ukraine is entering its fourth year, the EU is reassessing the strength of transatlantic ties after Trump's election, and the new European Commission is defining its mandate for 2025-2029 to strengthen the Union's competitiveness globally. Poland's programme reflects the needs of the incoming leadership and its legislative agenda as well as an intention to influence the overall policy direction in the next six months, rather than stressing legislative output.

Holding the presidency at this crucial time presents an opportunity for Poland to showcase leadership in policymaking and to guide the EU's agenda, setting the course beyond its six-month term. The country is given a chance to help shape European leadership on issues such as Ukraine, defence and enlargement - especially in the face of likely US unilateralism. Nonetheless, advancing the necessary reforms for a secure and competitive Union will not be easy with ongoing political tensions in some of Europe's leading member states – such as Germany and France – and a waning unity on European level on the course of action for defence in the Europe's East.

To address the interlocking priorities of the incoming Commission – from competitiveness to defence and energy security – in its programme, Poland has set forward a holistic approach to security, developing its work along seven 'security dimensions': external, internal, information, economic, energy, food and health.

EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL SECURITY

External and internal security is a main element in the programme, especially in the context of the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine. Amongst the country's priorities are an **in-depth debate on defence financing in the EU, strengthening cooperation with NATO and non-EU partners**, and addressing the **challenges posed by migration security** at the EU's external borders. Indeed, Ukraine holds an important place in Poland's presidency programme, that calls for deeper cooperation with the country in the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy as well as reinvigorating the enlargement process by consolidating reforms and preserving the credibility of the European Union.

Poland's has expressed the intention to support the ongoing negotiations on the European Defence Investment Programme – which the Commission expected to launch in 2025 – and in promoting defence initiatives such as collaboration with other EU Member States on the 'East Shield'. Furthermore, strengthening border management through greater effectiveness and sustainability of voluntary and forced returns is also a priority. Poland underlined that this is important to respond to Russian hybrid warfare in the form of migrant flows, in particular from Belarus to Polish and Finnish borders. Poland could also support



policymaking on defence by building upon the objectives outlined in the White Paper on the Future of European defence, which is expected to be presented by Commissioner Kubilius and High Representative Kallas in the Commission's first 100 days.

In the internal security priority, furthermore, Poland has stressed the importance of **capacity building and cooperation to counter foreign interference and disinformation** and to improve the EU's ability to prevent hostile actions in cyberspace. This is seen as a crucial to increase electoral resilience and strengthen European democracies, especially given recent developments such as that of presidential elections in Romania. With Germany holding anticipated national elections in February, potential elections in France and Polish presidential elections in May 2025, resilience from potential interference is fundamental.

The expressed priorities of Poland reflect the country's own concerns and priorities as one of the countries that has been most deeply affected by the ongoing war in Ukraine. The country has also been on the forefront in responding to the demands of the crisis, showing leadership in coordinating EU countries that aim to continue strong support for Ukraine and increasing its spending in defence, which is projected to reach 4.7% of Polish GDP in 2025. This places Poland in a leading position in terms of expertise that it can leverage to achieve its goals although this will require maintaining unity amongst European Member States on defence priorities.

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ENERGY SECURITY

*In its comprehensive approach to security, another priority in the Polish agenda is energy security and competitiveness to promote the European a fair clean transition. While focusing on diversification and a move away from coal, the focus is placed on ensuring **security of supply and protecting critical infrastructure**. This includes discontinuing imports of Russian energy as well as 'revising the EU's energy security framework to enhance the physical security and cybersecurity of energy infrastructure in the EU and its neighbourhood'. A concrete achievement for the Presidency could be the conclusion of the Clean Industrial Deal, which aims to address the competitiveness concerns of some of Europe's strategic sectors. Cooperation with the Gulf States (EU-GCC) and investment in the Global Gateway strategy (particularly in the digital, energy and transport sectors) are also stated priorities for energy security.*



FOOD SECURITY

A competitive Europe and resilient Europe that achieves a successful clean transition, must also consider the importance of food security, underlined by the Polish presidency. The programme is especially attentive to the future of the Common Agricultural Policy after 2027, which must be designed to support farmers and the development of rural areas. According to the programme, the policy should encourage farmers to take action to protect the environment rather than force them to tackle climate change through specific actions. Another aspect considered by Poland is the challenges that enlargement represents to agriculture, an issue which has been contentious in the country.



THE FUTURE OF TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS

*While Poland strives for a stronger, safer and more competitive Europe, the future of transatlantic relations looms over Europe's global stance and priorities. For this, Poland has included the **deepening of transatlantic relations and dialogue on global issues** on its agenda, covering EU-US coordination in the face of Russia's aggression towards Ukraine, the Eastern Neighbourhood, China and the Indo-Pacific region, energy policy, new technologies and the Connectivity Agenda. Transatlantic relations are bound to become a challenge that the EU must be prepared for with a growing transatlantic divide on trade, China policies as well as responses to global crises risk testing also European unity. A priority for Poland will be to ensure unity amongst its Member States and counter internal divides.*

As the largest of the three countries in the current Council presidency trio, Poland is well positioned to undertake ambitious policy dialogues at the European level to determine the course of policymaking beyond its mandate. The Commission's goal of pursuing numerous pieces of legislation in the first 100 days of its mandate presents an excellent opportunity for Poland to determine concrete action through agenda setting, formal meetings, and informal discussions and ultimately to acquire a leadership role at the European level. This position is not new for Poland: Since 2022, the country has been a strong ally of Ukraine pushing for coordinated EU support. In the face of German and French political instability, calls have already been made for Poland to fulfil a stronger role. Nonetheless, the future of transatlantic relations and the upcoming presidential elections at home might pose challenges for the country to pursue its ambitious programme in the upcoming months.



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