

## 2168. Council GENERAL AFFAIRS

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### **Malta**

Following Malta's reactivation of its membership application, and on the basis of the Commission's report updating its 1993 opinion, the Council decided that screening with Malta should start as soon as possible. This is all the more important, since it would help the Commission to better assess Malta's state of preparation in its future regular report, which will be submitted at the end of the year together with the regular reports on the other candidate countries regarding their progress towards accession. The start of screening with Malta does not prejudice future decisions to be taken by the European Council on the basis of the regular report by the Commission.

In the meantime, it is important for Malta to define, as soon as possible, a National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA), as the establishment of such a framework would enable Malta to identify its priorities and define the means for achieving them. The Union is ready to assist Malta to this end. The Commission was also invited to come forward, as soon as possible, with appropriate suggestions towards defining a specific pre-accession strategy for Malta, which will be examined by the Council in due course.

Taking into account the above orientations, the Presidency intends to invite Malta to participate in the next meeting of the European Conference.