

## LAWRENCE GONZI, NEW PRIME MINISTER OF MALTA

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Malta's ruling party leader Lawrence Gonzi was appointed today prime minister on Tuesday to lead the small Mediterranean island into the European Union in May.

Gonzi was sworn in by President Guido de Marco minutes after Eddie Fenech Adami, 70, handed in his resignation letter to formalise his retirement from politics. Gonzi, a 50-year-old trained lawyer, had succeeded Fenech Adami as leader of the Nationalist Party on March 3. A relative newcomer to politics and a government minister since 1998, Gonzi said last week his priorities would be to cut a ballooning public deficit to three percent of gross domestic product (GDP), the EU target, from the current 9.7 percent.

He also pledged to improve the investment climate and the island's environment and put a stronger emphasis on tourism, which contributes a quarter of GDP.

Gonzi will attend next EPP Summit in Meise, on 25 March. A new cabinet was expected to be announced later on Tuesday.