



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

SLOVENIAN PRESIDENCY PROGRAMME

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2007: Celebrations, and agreement on the new Treaty

The fiftieth anniversary of the signature of the Treaties of Rome united 27 EU Member States **in celebration**. Almost half a billion European citizens »*have united for the better. Today we live together as was never possible before.*« (Berlin Declaration)

The success of the great European project is partly due to our ability to reflect on both, what has been achieved and how we want to proceed. Such reflection is built into the very dynamics of the Union. Yet, there are times when issues build up and we need to take a deeper breath. The last such period began when ratification of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe failed. The period ended when an agreement on the Reform Treaty was reached under the German Presidency, culminating in the signature of the Treaty in Lisbon in December 2007.

Two elements must be borne in mind from this period:

(1) European integration reached a level at which **its main achievements are secured**. Although the reflection period demanded much energy from everyone: EU institutions, Member States and European citizens, further development of the internal market and other EU policies was never interrupted. **Commitment and internal dynamism are the guarantee of EU stability.**

(2) However, commitment and dynamism alone are not enough, as they fail to provide strategic guidance for European integration: **its deepening, enlargement and external competitiveness**. Bold and strategic decisions are therefore required. Time and again, we must draw on the same courage that the founding fathers had when laying the foundations of Europe. Time and again, we need to take decisions such as those which, in 2007, resulted in completion of the

fifth EU enlargement, the first enlargement of the Euro area and finally, enlargement of the Schengen area.

2008: A new foundation for new challenges

Had it not been for the EU's strategic spirit, Slovenia would not be holding the EU Presidency today. The first Presidency of a new Member State confirms the historic legitimacy of the decision to unite the European continent and in doing so overcome its unnatural division. Indeed, it is a tribute to the courage with which both Western democratic nations, and Central and Eastern European nations recently liberated from totalitarian communism, seized the historic opportunity of the end of the Cold War.

The need to identify key challenges and find timely and efficient responses remains essential. **The reflection period and the year 2007 have therefore not been in vain.** On the contrary, the EU launched some essential debates that will shape our future, for instance setting up an ambitious framework for discussions on climate change, in relation to the issue of energy policy. It is increasingly evident that the EU needs to change its approach from merely adapting to globalization, to actively shaping it.

The Lisbon Treaty already acknowledges these discussions. It is the first EU Treaty signed by 27 Member States. It is therefore up to all of us to finish the process and prepare for the implementation of the Treaty. Slovenia is therefore determined that: **(1) a successful ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty will be the priority of our Presidency.** Together with the 26 other Member States, and in particular with the forthcoming French Presidency, we are determined to lay new foundations for the Union before the next elections to the European Parliament in 2009. Common foundations will allow the Union to face all other challenges, and Slovenia will draw particular attention to four of them:

(2) Energy-climate package

The Presidency believes that the issue of energy and climate change demands decisive action by all 27 EU Member States. There is much at stake: **European quality of life, which would not be the same without secure and sustainable energy supply,** the great opportunity of the "green revolution" for growth and jobs, and the **role of the EU as a global leader.**

(3) Lisbon Strategy

As we approach the second Lisbon cycle, the renewed Lisbon Strategy is showing good results. This is important, as the greatest expectations of EU citizens lie in growth and jobs. Timely adoption of the Integrated Guidelines will enable the Member States to further implement their reforms.

(4) Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy

Enlargement has been one of the most successful EU policies. Under the Slovenian Presidency, accession negotiations with Croatia and Turkey will continue on the basis of their progress towards fulfilling EU membership criteria.

Together with its partners from the Western Balkans, the Presidency will aim to strengthen the European perspective for the **Western Balkan** countries. Five years after the Greek Presidency, it is time to refresh the Thessaloniki agenda and complete the network of Stabilization and Association Agreements. Our goal is also to take further steps to enable accelerated introduction of European standards in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania.

The Presidency will pay particular attention to **Kosovo**. Expectations of the key role of the EU in Kosovo are justified, and the Presidency will, while maintaining a high level of the EU unity, actively encourage efforts to bring about a solution that will ensure long-term stability of the Western Balkans.

In line with the principle of differentiation and individual approach, the Presidency will strengthen cooperation with the **countries of Eastern and Southern neighbourhood**. Economic cooperation and enhanced people-to-people contacts between the EU and its neighbours will be in the focus.

(5) Intercultural dialogue

2008 was proclaimed the **European Year of Intercultural Dialogue**. The Presidency understands intercultural dialogue as the basis for long-term EU action rather than a unique event. It is a strategic category of coexistence in diversity. Overcoming stereotypes and prejudices is vital for a number of areas: migration, the fight against organised crime, and terrorism.

The Slovenian Presidency rounds off the first trio of Presidencies and the implementation of the first 18-month programme. Cooperation with our partners, Germany and Portugal, has been a unique and positive experience. In order to ensure a smooth transition to the next trio, Slovenia will cooperate closely with France, the Czech Republic and Sweden.

Future of the Union – our common future

The Lisbon Treaty – a new era for Europe

Having reached agreement on the Lisbon Treaty, the Union stands ready to face today's major challenges. Timely implementation of the Treaty is in our common interest, and the highest priority in 2008 will be the successful conclusion of the ratification procedures in the Member States. In conjunction with the EU institutions, the incoming French Presidency and other Member States, Slovenia will take all necessary steps to ensure that the Treaty is fully applicable on the day of its entry into force.

Accession negotiations continue

Enlargement has been one of the most successful EU policies. Accession negotiations with Croatia and Turkey will continue during the Slovenian Presidency subject to the progress of each country in fulfilling EU membership criteria.

New focus on the Western Balkans

The stability of the Western Balkans – a region encircled by Member States - is of major importance for the security and prosperity of the entire Union. The Stabilisation and Association process has proved to be an efficient strategic instrument for enhancing stability and promoting reform processes in the region. Western Balkan countries have made good progress in recent years. Several key milestones in the transition process are expected in 2008: the review of the 2003 Thessaloniki Agenda; the conclusion of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement network; and the strengthening of regional cooperation in various areas.

In 2008, the EU and the international community will have to strengthen their role in solving the Kosovo issue, and in the implementation of the new status of Kosovo. The situation in Kosovo will continue to inform the Union's positions, in particular in terms of security, law and order, the status of minority ethnic groups and the ability of Kosovo to contribute to stability in the Western Balkans. The Presidency's actions will be based on the 2007 December European Council conclusions. Preparations for the Donors' Conference for Kosovo will continue, and

the Presidency will further support the progress of Kosovo in the Stabilisation and Association process.

Schengen enlargement and future management of the EU's external border

Enlargement of the Schengen area has been a great achievement in support of the free movement of persons, one of the four fundamental EU freedoms. Internal land and sea border controls were lifted in nine Member States in December 2007, and the Slovenian Presidency will oversee the abolition of border controls at EU airports in March 2008. We will also seek to communicate the benefits of Schengen enlargement to EU citizens.

Schengen enlargement also provides an opportunity for reflection and debate on the future management of the EU's external border. This will be the subject of discussions by EU Interior Ministers during their meeting in Slovenia.

Euro area

The Euro area will be further expanded in 2008, with the adoption of the common European currency in Cyprus and Malta. The Presidency will also support other Member States in their preparations for the adoption of the Euro.

Reflection on EU policies

Having reached agreement on the future institutional framework, the Union can now reflect on the future of its common policies and its budget. A "Health Check" of the Common Agricultural Policy will examine the results of the last reform and suggest possible modifications, with a view to improving the functioning of the existing instruments. On the basis of the 4th Cohesion Forum conclusions, the Slovenian Presidency will lead further discussions on the future of EU cohesion policy.

The Lisbon Strategy: strengthening Europe's role in the age of globalisation

Launching a new cycle

The Lisbon Strategy was renewed in 2005 to focus on higher and stable economic growth and the creation of more and better jobs. It therefore represents a significant contribution to the EU's solid economic performance. A new three-year cycle of the Lisbon Strategy begins in 2008, providing the opportunity to give renewed drive to implementing reforms and a response to recent challenges. The commitment of all Member States to implementing National Reform Programmes in line with a common strategy remains crucial. The Slovenian Presidency will seek to balance the need for stability of the programme framework, the Integrated Guidelines and the Community Lisbon Programme, with the need to respond to new challenges and identified shortcomings. We should also strive for enhanced ownership of the Lisbon Strategy, which would contribute to improving its visibility to EU citizens.

In the next cycle, the Lisbon Strategy should continue to focus on the four priority areas identified at the 2006 Spring European Council: (1) building an innovative and creative knowledge-based society, (2) creating the conditions for a competitive and dynamic business environment, (3) developing human capital and addressing demographic challenges to ensure greater participation in the labour market, and (4) responding to energy and environmental challenges. The Lisbon Strategy therefore represents a robust response to the challenges of globalisation, while also advancing the aims of sustainable development.

Investment in knowledge and creativity is the driving force for progress

Europe must build its competitiveness on **innovation and creativity**. Creating a knowledge society is the right answer to global challenges, since it exploits cultural potential, promotes research and development, fuels economic growth and creates jobs. Promoting more and better investment in research and development thus remains a major goal of the Slovenian Presidency.

With a view to achieving greater **synergies of research capacities** and halting the brain drain, it is necessary to press ahead with the establishment of an open

European Research Area and associated network organisations, such as the European Institute of Technology. We will also continue to work on Joint Technology Initiatives and other activities which facilitate and encourage better cooperation between researchers and businesses in the area of research and development.

It is also important to strengthen the role of **education**, training and lifelong learning in the "knowledge triangle" of research-innovation-education. Only highly skilled, creative and entrepreneurial individuals can drive European development forward. Universities therefore have a crucial role to play in the EU's research and innovation performance.

The **GALILEO** project is of great scientific, economic and strategic importance for the EU, and the Slovenian Presidency will therefore take all necessary steps to ensure its successful implementation.

Europe must aim at establishing a globally competitive **research infrastructure**. Improved coordination is therefore required in the use of financial resources from EU-level programmes for research, development and innovation, Structural Funds and national resources. Slovenia will also highlight the importance of access to research infrastructure for small and medium-sized enterprises.

We believe that Europe can also contribute to the development of its neighbouring regions through cooperation in the field of science and research. The Slovenian Presidency will therefore aim to facilitate their further integration into European research programmes.

Europe needs a competitive and dynamic business environment

Given their innovative potential and their dynamic and flexible approach, **small and medium-sized enterprises** (SMEs) are one of the main engines of economic growth and competitiveness in Europe. The EU has already made considerable progress regarding the time and costs of setting up a business, and must now support SME growth. The Presidency will therefore focus primarily on access of start-up companies to sources of finance, and on cluster policy - the latter is particularly important in terms of SMEs' ability to access research infrastructure.

EU competitiveness and innovation initiatives are also motivated by a gradual transition to low-carbon, energy-efficient technologies, products and services. The Slovenian Presidency will therefore pay particular attention to expected initiatives by the European Commission in the area of **sustainable industrial policy** and eco-innovation.

The Slovenian Presidency will also focus on further deepening and integrating the **internal market**, on the basis of the four EU freedoms. The Commission's Review of the Internal Market therefore represents a key source of further initiatives, which could help to achieve a flexible and competitive internal market.

Slovenia will aim to take forward work on a number of priority areas for the internal market, including the electronic communications legislative package, financial services, postal services, establishing the Community patent, the Customs Code and taxation.

The Slovenian Presidency will continue with activities connected to improving the **stability of financial markets**, as foreseen in the agreed roadmap.

We also believe that concrete measures in the field of **consumer protection** are an important aspect of the internal market, and the Slovenian Presidency will therefore make particular efforts to reach an agreement on consumer credits.

In view of the Member States' commitment to reducing administrative burdens, the Slovenian Presidency will lead a debate on the progress achieved in all areas of the **better regulation agenda**. We will work particularly to ensure the reduction of administrative burdens for businesses, in order to enhance their flexibility and promote their use of new technologies.

Information and communication technologies underpin a competitive and open economy as a basis for an information society, and have therefore become increasingly important to the way we live, work and communicate. The Presidency will therefore support further rapid development of the information society.

Efficient expenditure and the quality of public finances are important factors underlying economic growth and labour market performance. Expenditure

on social transfers and education will therefore constitute the focus of Slovenian Presidency in this area.

By investing in people, Europe builds its future

The European labour market is faced with numerous challenges, all of which call for a robust response. The concept of **flexicurity** is a major element of such a response, as it aims to strike a mutually reinforcing balance between security for workers and flexibility of the labour market. The Slovenian Presidency therefore welcomes adoption of the common principles of flexicurity, and aims to lay the foundations for national flexicurity pathways, where the role of social partners will be of utmost importance.

The EU faces a **changing social reality**. Slovenia has put the efforts to fight poverty and social exclusion, in particular of children and young people, at the forefront of its Presidency. Further work on active inclusion, establishing sustainable and adequate systems of social protection and accessible, high-quality social services are all central pillars of our approach, and should be particularly addressed in the light of the new EU social agenda and ongoing discussions of the "social-reality stocktaking" within the EU.

Our ability to achieve the Lisbon Strategy goals will depend largely on how efficiently we can tackle **demographic challenges**. The Slovenian Presidency will therefore take forward the debate on the European Commission's Communication on Demographic Change, with a particular focus on the opportunities arising from close cooperation between different generations. Solidarity and co-existence, with a special emphasis on long-term care, will be priorities in the field of employment, social affairs and equal opportunities.

The EU attaches great importance to **equal opportunities policy**, as it constitutes a crucial part of the wider social dimension of the Lisbon Strategy. The Presidency will seek to make progress on issues such as elimination of gender stereotypes, and enhancing participation and empowerment of women in society, with a view to achieving gender equality. The fight against discrimination in all areas of society will also be promoted, in particular opportunities for disabled persons across the EU.

Young people represent a demographic segment with considerable economic and social potential. They should be integrated into the labour market and be able to advance professionally as early as possible. The Slovenian Presidency will seek to make progress on concrete recommendations on youth employment.

Slovenia will take forward work on implementing the European Youth Pact, which efficiently combines youth inclusion in education, employment and society with advancing the Lisbon Strategy. One of the accents of the Slovenian Presidency in the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue will be to promote multilingualism and intercultural exchanges among youth, as a means of increasing their employability, mobility and social inclusion.

Europe cares for the environment

The 2007 Spring European Council set out the basic guidelines for a **new integrated climate and energy policy**, and it is now time to take further steps. Europe has a unique opportunity to show global leadership and become a role model for the rest of the world in combating climate change. An early agreement on the climate-energy package in the areas of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, emission trading schemes and renewable energy sources should therefore be a common priority for all EU partners.

Ensuring a secure, sustainable and competitive energy supply is our common goal. The Slovenian Presidency will seek to reach an agreement on further liberalisation of the internal market for gas and electricity, with a view to strengthening competitiveness and putting in place the mechanisms to ensure security of supply. Promotion of sustainable energy policy and new energy technologies are enshrined in the European Strategic Energy Technology Plan and as such represent another important goal of the Slovenian Presidency.

By sharing sustainable policy practices, the EU can also foster progress in energy technology in its neighbouring regions and thus, in the long run, contribute to their stability.

The Presidency will aim to take forward dialogue with other regions and countries on energy issues, with a view to achieving greater diversification of energy sources and transport routes, and ensuring security of supply.

On the basis of the agreement reached at the UN Climate Change Conference in Bali in December 2007, Slovenia will take all the necessary steps to ensure common EU negotiating positions, and will therefore work in close cooperation with the incoming French Presidency. The EU must also seek to make considerable progress in **negotiations on the post-Kyoto regime** at the next meeting of the Conference of Parties in December 2008.

The Presidency looks forward to the report of the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the European Commission on the **impact of climate change on international security**, which will be presented at the Spring European Council and will serve as a basis for proposing concrete policy measures at the EU level.

Other significant areas of economic and social development

Improved cooperation in health issues

The EU wishes actively to promote health, prevent diseases and improve access to healthcare, particularly in the light of population ageing and the diversity of health outcomes within and between the Member States. As cancer poses one of major health challenges in Europe, the Presidency will give special consideration to an integrated approach to tackling cancer through EU policies and activities.

In the context of health services, the Presidency will also seek to make progress with discussions on cross-border health care.

Preservation of biodiversity at the global level

Preservation of nature and biodiversity demands our constant attention, and the Union is committed to halting or reducing loss of biodiversity. The Slovenian Presidency will represent the EU at the regular meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Bonn in May 2008, where the EU will strive for progress at the international level.

Territorial cohesion and urban policy

Slovenia will build on the work of previous Presidencies in the area of territorial cohesion and urban policy, since these are two crucial elements of regional development in the EU. The role of local and regional communities is essential for inter-regional cooperation, reaching Lisbon Strategy goals and implementing the principle of subsidiarity.

Agriculture and fisheries

The far-reaching reform of the Common Market Organisation for wine represents the final stage of the Common Agricultural Policy reform, which was launched in 2003 with the twin goals of assuring competitive conditions on the wine market in the long term, and winning worldwide acclaim for European wines. Regarding food safety issues, Slovenia will aim to increase safety levels for both people and the environment. Within the framework of the Common Fisheries Policy, the Slovenian Presidency will in particular seek progress on the issue of illegal, undeclared and unregulated fishing.

Transport

Measures aimed at increasing transport safety are of the utmost importance for EU citizens. Slovenia will take forward proposals related to maritime safety as well as safety in road and rail transport. Further development of the Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T) will also be a focus of discussions, with special emphasis on a more efficient interconnection between maritime and land transport networks.

Strengthening the area of freedom, security and justice

Strengthening of the Schengen Area

The enlargement of the Schengen area, based on the SISone4all information system, demonstrates the Union's ability to respond efficiently to issues that directly affect the lives of our citizens. However, the development and introduction of a new Schengen information system (SIS II) remains a priority. The Slovenian Presidency will therefore monitor closely the preparations for its timely establishment.

Slovenia will also put in place the necessary conditions to carry through the evaluation procedure for Switzerland to join the Schengen area.

Towards a common asylum and immigration policy

The Slovenian Presidency will take forward work on the Global Approach to Migration and the commitments made with a view to extending and enhancing this activity. We will particularly aim to make progress in the area of legal migration and the fight against illegal migration.

On the basis of a discussion on the Green Paper, the Presidency will aim to further develop a common European asylum system. Other priorities include taking further steps towards the adoption of the Visa Code.

Enhancing police cooperation and information exchange

Future work on setting up a system of efficient information exchange between law enforcement authorities, in accordance with the principle of accessibility, will focus on the final transposition of the provisions of the Prüm Treaty into the EU law. Slovenia will also take forward work on strengthening Europol. Particular attention will be paid to the debate on further use of information systems and to enhanced cross-border cooperation in combating cross-border crime and terrorism.

The fight against international terrorism

The Slovenian Presidency will ensure continuity in the fight against international terrorism, particularly through implementing strategies and action plans. We will focus particularly on the global fight against terrorism, prevention of its financing

and combating radicalisation and recruitment, as well as control of explosives. The assessment of Member States' capacities in this field is an important aspect of action to tackle terrorism.

The external dimension of Justice and Home Affairs

In the context of full implementation of the Strategy for the External Dimension of Justice and Home Affairs, Slovenia will build on the work of previous Presidencies and give priority to enhancing dialogue with the Western Balkans, primarily by sharing EU best practice in the fight against organised crime.

Ensuring better access to justice and legal certainty

The Slovenian Presidency will aim to improve and simplify cooperation between national judicial authorities in civil and economic matters, by continuing with work on E-Justice. Particular attention will be devoted to progress in the field of family law, such as matrimonial and maintenance matters.

Mutual trust and closer cooperation on criminal matters

The creation of a common area of freedom, security and justice and abolition of internal borders between EU Member States requires closer cooperation between judicial authorities on criminal matters. By preparing a proposal for a Framework Decision on Judgements *in Absentia*, Slovenia will aim to improve and upgrade the existing instruments for judicial cooperation. As the future of Eurojust is closely related to progress in European cooperation on criminal matters, Slovenia will also seek to upgrade the legal basis for its efficient functioning.

Enhancing the external role of the EU in the area of security, development and economic relations

Our neighbourhood

Slovenia will aim to further strengthen the area of stability and prosperity in the EU neighbourhood within the framework of a unified and coherent European Neighbourhood Policy, while taking into consideration the principles of differentiation and individual approach to particular partner states. We will focus on further development of economic integration, enhanced mobility and the strengthening of dialogue with civil society. Particular attention will be paid to the continuation of the implementation of the Black Sea Synergy, which will be the main topic of the meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Black Sea Synergy states and the EU in Ukraine.

As regards the Barcelona process, the Presidency will put particular emphasis on intercultural dialogue. The specific contribution of Slovenia to the strengthening of partnership and dialogue is represented by the initiative to establish a Euro-Mediterranean University in Piran.

Central Asia

National programs are being prepared for each Central Asian country on the implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia. Slovenia will devote its attention to regional cooperation and will debate the report covering the first year of the Strategy's implementation in June 2008.

Dialogue with strategic partners and regions

The main event with regard to the EU political dialogue with third countries during the Slovenian Presidency will be the 5th Summit of EU and LAC countries. The summit will tackle two key current issues: social issues such as poverty, inequality and inclusion on the one hand and sustainable development issues, such as the environment, climate change and energy on the other. A summit between the EU and the USA will take place in Slovenia. The Presidency will also represent the Council of the European Union at separate summits with the Russian Federation and Japan.

Regional challenges

In cooperation with its international partners, the EU will strive to make progress in solving the most pressing political-security issues related to the Middle East, Iran, Iraq, Asia and the African continent, where we will start implementing the Joint Africa - EU Strategy and Action Plan adopted by Heads of State and Government at the EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon.

Strengthening of European Security and Defence Policy

The global role of the EU calls for the development of a strong and responsive European Security and Defence Policy capable of assuring stability and development on the basis of effective multilateralism and the European Security Strategy, not only in Europe but also worldwide. The Slovenian Presidency will aim to further strengthen the military and civilian capacities of the EU, and to promote an efficient and coherent conduct of crisis management operations.

International development cooperation

The European Union is the world's largest single donor of development aid. The Slovenian Presidency will take forward relevant activities aimed at reaching the Millennium Development Goals and will launch a debate on the coordination and division of labour in the field of development cooperation, with a view to hosting two important conferences on development and on efficiency in development aid. The Slovenian Presidency will also coordinate participation of EU Member States at the 12th Ministerial meeting of UNCTAD in Ghana.

Development cooperation activity will focus in particular on the provision of security and aid to children and women affected by armed conflicts.

Common Trade Policy

The EU will enhance its global role by further establishing trade partnerships with third countries and regions, by making efforts to successfully conclude a balanced and global agreement within the Doha Development Agenda and by promoting a free and open trade policy with mutual benefit and respect for the international rules and standards as key principles.

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