

Priorities of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union

1 July – 31 December 2012

Towards a Better Europe

The European Union needs to emerge stronger from the current economic crisis and reinstate its place in the international scene. Today, more than ever, it is necessary to further deepen European integration, strengthen social cohesion and ensure better quality of life for European citizens. Austerity measures are important in order to restore the confidence of the markets and ensure stability; but in parallel, it is imperative to take active measures in order to promote inclusive growth and job creation. The Union needs to be closer to its citizens and communicate a message of hope and solidarity to them, with social sensitivity. At the same time, the EU needs to enhance its international role, while being closer to its neighbours. The driving force for the essential reforms should be the fundamental principles and values of the Union.

The Cyprus Presidency, on the basis of these values, will work *Towards a Better Europe*; meaning a European Union more relevant to its citizens and to the world; a more *effective* Europe, contributing to sustainable **growth, social cohesion** and job creation through efficient and integrated policies; a European Union working on the basis of the underlying principle of **solidarity**, committing itself to a better future. All efforts will be directed to bequeath a better Europe to the younger generations.

During its Presidency, Cyprus is called upon to deal with key issues of the EU agenda, such as the Multiannual Financial Framework for the period 2014-2020. The Multiannual Financial Framework is an opportunity to agree on a budget that will contribute to growth and sustainable development, promote effective policies, increase EU's competitiveness and create more jobs. It is necessary to identify and bring out the elements of growth in all EU policies, with special emphasis on the citizens of the Union.

Working *Towards a Better Europe*, Cyprus Presidency has set four main priorities:

1. Europe, more efficient and sustainable

The aim will be to promote effective policies that will result in more efficient governance, addressing the uncertainty and instability caused by the crisis. The negotiations on the **Multiannual Financial Framework** for the period 2014-2020 will be the main priority of the Cyprus Presidency. The Presidency will work towards the finalization of the negotiations and the completion of a fair and effective EU budget, support growth and enhance employment opportunities. Emphasis will be given to the quality of spending so that the policies and programmes that will be financed under the

new Multiannual Financial Framework are policies with real European added value. Synergies are of paramount importance and complementarity with national policies needs to be ensured. In this respect, the Presidency will also seek to achieve the greatest possible progress in the negotiations on the legislative framework in relation to policies, such as the **Common Agricultural and Fisheries Policies**, the **Cohesion Policy** and the **Research and Innovation Policy** (Horizon 2020), as well as on the financial programmes in different sectoral policies.

Following the European Council conclusions in February 2012, Cyprus Presidency will also focus on **energy policy**. The **Trans-European Networks** on transport, telecommunications and energy and the **Connecting Europe Facility** are high on the agenda of the Cyprus Presidency; the adoption of these instruments will be vital for boosting the competitiveness of Europe, by improving infrastructure and strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion of Member States. Emphasis will also be placed on **sustainable development** and the follow up of the Rio+20 Summit. In line with the Europe 2020 Strategy, inclusive and equitable **green growth** shall be promoted through the **sustainable management of resources**, especially water. It is essential for the EU that policies on climate change, environment and energy are implemented in an integrated way. In addition, the Cyprus Presidency aspires to 're-energize' the EU **Integrated Maritime Policy**, which will address relevant challenges in an efficient and sustainable way.

2. Europe, with a better performing and growth-based economy

The economic crisis has highlighted the need for further effectiveness of policies and measures of the Union. The approach for the recovery of the European economies should comprise of both fiscal consolidation and sustainable economic growth measures.

The Presidency will seek to work on the **new enhanced framework of economic governance** and reinforce budgetary surveillance, so as to ensure fiscal stability. In parallel, the EU needs to recover from the crisis and stimulate growth. In this respect, the **monitoring of the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy** is equally important for the Cyprus Presidency.

It is of utmost significance that the regulatory framework of **financial services** is strengthened through the implementation of measures for greater market transparency, protection of consumers and investors and effective management of financial crises. Moreover, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Single Market, the Presidency will give impetus to the **deepening of the internal market**, through the promotion of relevant initiatives emphasizing in particular the role of SME's. The strengthening of the single market is an important element for stimulating economic

growth and advancing the European economy. The Presidency will also promote an effective digital single market, within the framework of the European Digital Agenda.

3. Europe, more relevant to its citizens, with solidarity and social cohesion

Cyprus Presidency will aim to work towards bringing Europe closer to its citizens, giving emphasis on **youth employment**, in view of the rising unemployment rates in the Union. Furthermore, one of the most important objectives of the Presidency is the establishment of the **Common European Asylum System** by the end of 2012, focusing on building up practical cooperation between Member States in protecting the rights of those in need of international protection.

The Presidency will also deal with issues related to the **European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations** and issues related to **health** and **children's well being**, such as the prevention of diseases, the promotion of healthy lifestyle, as well as the prevention and combating of child poverty. Issues related to **education** and **culture** will also be highlighted, such as the promotion of literacy and the provision of more qualitative education and training, in order to meet the needs of the job market. The relevant financial programmes are also important in this respect. The Presidency will also place emphasis on the further participation and involvement of social partners, NGOs and local authorities in the formulation and implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy. In addition, the new legal framework for the **protection of personal data** is another issue of priority for the Cyprus Presidency.

4. Europe in the world, closer to its neighbours

The Presidency will work closely with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European External Action Service, which are responsible for the external and security affairs and assure coherence and continuity.

Special emphasis will be placed on the **southern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy**, in order to enhance the relations with Mediterranean partners, while ensuring pluralism and a multi-faceted relationship and thus, promoting the multiplication of channels of communication with all fields of society. The Presidency will also promote all processes related to **enlargement** and work towards strengthening **food security**, aiming to give emphasis on EU **development goals**, ensuring progress on the Union's development commitments.

Growth can also be promoted through a strengthened EU **external trade policy** and the Cyprus Presidency will work towards this direction.