

Presentation by the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Tourism to the IMCO Committee of the European Parliament, Brussels 10/7/2012

Honourable Members of the European Parliament, Mr. Chairman, Vice-Chairpersons, and members of the IMCO

Parliamentary Committee,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My presence at the European Parliament today, and before the IMCO Committee in particular, is a continuation of an established practice by the Presidency of the Council to brief you on the priorities and actions it undertakes to promote during its six-month term on issues of the Internal Market, Consumers and Technical Harmonisation. However, far beyond my response to established practices, my presence here is a declaratory act of my respect towards the institution of the European Parliament and the crucial role it plays in making the EU more democratic, so that it can come closer to its citizens and be able to listen to them more effectively.

Besides, the main message and basic effort of the Cyprus Presidency is for a better Europe, first and foremost for its citizens.

Since the Lisbon Treaty came into effect, the competences of the European Parliament have been broadened, making it a co-legislator with the Council. As representatives here of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, we express our readiness to work closely with the European Parliament, so as to promote successfully the files we are going to handle in the second half of 2012 in the fields of our responsibility.

In this my initial intervention I shall concisely present the basic policies and secondary issues we shall be dealing with in the next six months, as they have been agreed in the context of the TRIO Presidency. On this occasion, I would like to thank both the Polish and the Danish Presidencies for the cooperation we had throughout this period, and also to congratulate them on the successful handling of important files they undertook.

This work, of course, is the product of significant input and cooperation from the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee, as well as the European Commission. Mr. President, Vice-Chairs, members of the Committee, I congratulate you on your work.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The objectives of the Cyprus Presidency in regard to the Internal Market move along two main lines:

To promote and complete, wherever possible, the process of adopting the legislative Proposals of the European Commission for the actions of the existing Act for the Single

Market I. Of course, the Proposals for which approval is pending are many, despite the substantial efforts exerted by the two previous Presidencies of Poland and Denmark.

However, we are hopeful that with the close cooperation of our partners both in the Council and the European Commission, as well as the other institutional bodies of the EU and your Committee in particular and the European Parliament as a whole, it will be possible to achieve the greatest possible progress. Besides, the aim is a common one and it is none other than the return to growth, the stimulation of employment and the creation of conditions to preserve social cohesion.

To initiate the new actions for the Single Market II Act. We are awaiting the timely release of the relevant Announcement by the European Commission, in order to make possible the preparation of Conclusions by the Cyprus Presidency, which will then be put before the Competition Council for approval in December.

In parallel to this and on the occasion of the completion of 20 years since the establishment of the Internal Market, the Cyprus Presidency will hold a special congress on 20 October in Nicosia with the primary aim of promoting the awareness of the civil society in Cyprus about the achievements so far, as well as the difficulties and challenges that lie ahead.

In regard to our secondary priorities that fall within the single market Act, allow me to expand a little on the issue of Public Procurements. The main objective of the Cyprus Presidency is to enact a simplified, flexible and effective legal framework, which would reduce the administrative burden, provide legal security and offer support, on the one hand, to the fulfillment of the objectives of the European Union for intelligent and sustainable growth without exclusions ("Europe 2020" strategy), and the most efficient use of public resources on the other.

The introduction of the work model by the Danish Presidency, the cluster approach, that is, was particularly efficient. We adopt this practice and it is our intention to continue working on the basis of the same model. Our intention as the Cyprus Presidency is to exert every effort, working together with your Committee, as well as with the other competent organs of the Union, to achieve a final agreement for two directive proposals, the classic one and the utilities one, until the end of the year.

More specifically, our aim is for the rules that will be adopted to safeguard:

The simplification and the enhancement of flexibility for the procedures of concluding public procurement contracts, using the toolkit approach, the updating of provisions and the promotion of e-procurement.

The strategic use of public procurements and their response to the new challenges for achieving optimal perception of the quality-price relationship, the introduction of expiry date cost, the application of sanctions for infringements of the social, labour and environmental law and the promotion of innovation.

Better access of small and medium size companies to the market through simplifying the obligation for written documentation, the acceptance of personal declarations as

preliminary means of proof and the restriction of demands for participation in the selection procedures.

Proper procedures through addressing bad business practices, such as conflict of interests, favouritism and corruption.

Best governance through administrative cooperation, the creation and utilization of knowledge centres and the effective supervision by member-states.

Concerning the directive proposal for concessions contracts, we consider that a simplified form of directive with limited rules that will ensure the principles of transparency, equal treatment and non-discrimination, would contribute to the mobility of private and public investments for recovery and long-term structural change. We shall work in that direction, aiming to achieve an agreement.

The issue of professional qualifications is also an equally important one. The modernization of the existing legal framework for the recognition of professional qualifications is a top priority for the EU in the context of the Single Market Act, as well as for the Cyprus Presidency. There is an overriding need to facilitate the mobility of professionals and to reinforce the trust and cooperation between member states, so as to fill the gap of any lack of job opportunities with ensuing benefits for the labour market, the stimulation of competitiveness of the European economy and the strengthening of the Single Market.

Simplifying the rules for the mobility of professional in the European Union has by now become a pressing need, as well as the strengthening of cooperation and the restoration of trust between the member states. The Cyprus Presidency shall make every effort to promote the proposal in the framework of the activities of the Council's working group, while at the same time it will seek contact with the European Parliament in order to achieve the necessary convergences of both bodies.

The proposal for the review of the **Accounting Directives** is another issue for which the Cyprus Presidency is hopeful that the triple dialogues it will engage in with the European Council will prove successful and the completion of the procedure for adopting the proposal will become possible before the end of the year.

Concerning **consumers' issues**, the Cyprus Presidency will undertake issues that fall within the twelve actions for the "Single Market Act" and constitute a priority for us all. It is, I believe, necessary to place the citizen at the heart of the Single Market with the ultimate aim of the citizens enjoying all the benefits.

By demanding variety, quality and reliability for the products and services they purchase, consumers can play an important role in the growth and competitiveness of enterprises, as well as of the Union in general. This calls for the effective protection of the citizens through the application of rights about which they are well informed. After all, as we all know, consumer expenditure corresponds to 56% of the EU's GDP. It is, therefore, obvious that an environment, in which the consumers can enjoy their rights and have easy access to legitimate protection, is absolutely necessary. In this context, we shall work for the completion of the following:

Directive proposal for the alternative consumer dispute resolution (ADR) and of Regulation Proposal for the on-line consumer dispute resolution (ODR).

In this chapter, and beyond the Single Market Act, the Cyprus Presidency will promote and aims to complete the regulation proposal for the consumers programme 2014 - 2020.

Strengthening the effectiveness of the legislation for health protection and safety of products is also a top priority for our Presidency. We shall therefore exert the greatest possible effort to find a compromise agreement as regards the set of 9 legislative proposals, which align the existing sectional legislation with the New Legislative Framework. The Cyprus Presidency's objective is to complete the examination of the file in the Working Group and after having worked constructively with the European Parliament, to achieve the adoption of the package on 1st Reading.

The efforts of providing improved legislation for the enhancement of safety, while at the same time promoting the protection of the environment and people's health, will be reinforced through our aim to complete the file regarding the Pleasure Boats Directive. The adoption of this Directive will secure equitable statutory regulations for the main commercial partners, as well as the smooth functioning of the internal market for pleasure boats.

Although work on the specific file is still at an early stage, we have the best indications from the European Parliament that there is room for reaching an agreement in a short period of time. The aim of the Cyprus Presidency is to have a constructive input to the development of this file.

In respect of the two regulations concerning Motor Vehicles it is obvious by now that there is protracted indecision in finding a compromise solution. The Cyprus Presidency is committed to work constructively in bringing about the completion of the long-drawn discussions on these two files. The achievement of an agreement will give a boost to the internal market through the defining of harmonized rules for the approval of a standard, while at the same time contributing to the protection of the environment, the maximization of safety and the optimization of market supervision.

At this point I would like to thank you for your attention and I am at your disposal for questions.