

# Programme of the Hellenic Presidency of the Council of the European Union

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## **Europe: Our Common Quest**

1. Greece assumes the Presidency of the Council of the EU during the first semester of 2014, a year of important changes and new beginnings for the European Union. First of all, 2014 will witness the start of a new 7-year macroeconomic programming period, under the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2014-2020; secondly, it will witness the holding of elections for a new European Parliament, in May 2014; finally, as the year drives to its close, the appointment of a new European Commission will take place, in October 2014, followed by the appointment of a new European Council President, in November 2014.

2014 will also be marked by the midterm review of the Europe 2020 Strategy, as well as the continuation of the work to complete and deepen the EMU.

The Hellenic Presidency of the EU comes amid these significant changes and beginnings. Our duty and our goal is to see them through as effectively and smoothly as possible, in order to lay the groundwork for the years to come. At the same time, our objective will be to promote tangible results and pragmatic solutions on the various issues on the Union's agenda, across the ten different Council configurations.

2. The Hellenic Presidency comes at a time when Europe is going through a crucial transitional phase. The financial crisis imposed the implementation of restrictive fiscal policies in order to overcome initial deficiencies in the architecture of the EMU, safeguard financial stability and gradually return to sustainable public finances. However, the extent and intensity of the crisis, as well as the level of recession and unemployment that have ensued, have shaken the confidence of an important segment of European citizens in EU institutions and their ability to design and implement reliable, sound and growth-enhancing economic policies aiming at recovery, prosperity and high levels of employment. At the same time, austere fiscal policies had a great effect on social cohesion, particularly in countries directly affected by the crisis.

At this important juncture, the EU's biggest challenge is to foster growth, competitiveness and jobs and to ensure stability and prosperity for all; for this the EU has to reaffirm its mission at the hearts and minds of its citizens. In this context, the EU is called upon today to safeguard financial stability through the deepening of the EMU, to boost growth-enhancing economic policies aiming to fight unemployment by, and inter alia, enhancing synergies between migration and growth and to restore lending to the economy, in particular to SMEs.

3. The Hellenic Presidency's intention to profoundly explore "Europe: Our Common Quest" cannot but reflect the importance it attributes to reinvigorating the Union's solidity and solidarity, as well as its relevance to the everyday life of its citizens. Briefly, the promotion of policies and actions for achieving growth, combating unemployment, promoting economic and social cohesion and structural reforms, deepening integration and completion of the EMU, as well as addressing external challenges, including EU enlargement, formulate the priority framework of the Hellenic Presidency.

The main principles which will guide the work of the Hellenic Presidency can be summarized as follows:

➤ Enhancing civic and society engagement in the EU, through policies and initiatives in response to the citizens' everyday problems, concerns and insecurities. Our efforts will focus on the areas of economic recovery, employment, cohesion, mobility of EU citizens and European security, both internal and external. The ultimate goal is the evolution of the EU into a community of shared values and "common destiny" for all its peoples, while preserving and strengthening the European social and economic model.



➤ Deepening the Union, especially the EMU, by promoting policies and actions to remedy and restore initial deficiencies in the Euro area architecture, which have been unveiled by the recent crisis. In this context, the aim remains to preserve the integrity of the common currency, on a solid and sustainable basis, and to ensure financial stability. EMU deepening will take place fully respecting the Single Market, through a procedure open to non-Eurozone member-states.

➤ Reinforcing EU democratic legitimacy and accountability, along with building up the collectivity and solidarity links among Member States, as well as incrementally constructing European democracy and expanding civil rights.

4. The Hellenic Presidency has chosen three policy areas as its main priority focus. These are classified under the telling titles of 1) Growth-Jobs-Cohesion, 2) Integration of the EU and the Eurozone, and 3) Migration-Borders-Mobility.

The Presidency also intends to place particular importance on EU maritime policies, both as a source of growth and prosperity for the Union as a whole, including the energy sector, but also as regards EU security, internal and external. Maritime policies will constitute a thematic that will run horizontally through the Presidency's Priorities.

Finally, in cooperation and coordination with the following Italian Presidency, Greece intends for 2014 to be the "European Year of the Mediterranean".

### **1. Growth-Jobs-Cohesion**

In a period when unemployment has reached unacceptably high rates in several EU member-states, affecting especially the youth, and when recession is a constant threat to European economies, growth becomes a matter of overriding importance for the Hellenic Presidency. Growth benefits the economy and promotes social cohesion and political stability in the Union, in a multifaceted way. From the Presidency's perspective, Jobs and Growth are structurally and inextricably connected. Within this framework, the initiatives and actions at the European level for reversing the negative employment trends and for boosting job creation are absolutely necessary in order to avert the danger of a "jobless growth".

Striking the right balance between fiscal consolidation and growth-enhancing policies (in full alignment with the Europe 2020 Strategy) is considered to be the catalyst towards achieving the necessary cohesion among national economic policies, hence among European societies. It is such a cohesion that constitutes the laying foundation of further European integration, which is the second priority of the Hellenic presidency.

The main objective is to return to sustainable public finances while promoting jobs-creating growth policies. This could be achieved through the enhanced implementation of the Compact for Growth and Jobs, a focus on employment, as well as improved SME's access to finance, by, inter alia, prioritizing the implementation of the EIB-Commission Investment Plan.

The European Investment Bank (EIB) can have a strong role in relation to the labour-intensive projects (e.g. projects for SMEs, basic infrastructure, energy and climate), also having the support and trust of the European Central Bank (ECB).

The Hellenic Presidency welcomes the EIB's new mandate to the European Investment Fund (EIF) of up to EUR 4 billion and will support the Commission and the EIB in their efforts to further enhance the EIF capacity through an increase in its capital with a view to reaching final agreement by May 2014.



The Hellenic Presidency will further explore all possible ways to increase funding for the real economy, and particularly for the SMEs, by promoting the discussion on the financing of growth, including long-term alternative sources of funding.

In any case, it would be essential to launch the dialogue on those specific subject areas that offer high growth potential and, at the same time, job creation, such as innovation, services to firms, transport, shipping and tourism.

The interim evaluation of the "Europe 2020 Strategy", which will begin at the Spring 2014 European Council, lends the context and offers the opportunity for concrete initiatives. A first, but not sufficient, step in the right direction was taken by the European Council in June 2013, when European leaders decided to strengthen efforts to combat youth unemployment, and, at the same time, to endorse the joint EIB-Commission initiative («Investment Plan») to finance SMEs, as the key employers in the European economy.

## **2. Further integration of EU-Eurozone**

Deepening the new EMU architecture, restoring financial liquidity and returning to growth will certainly remain key priorities for the EU rotating presidencies of the coming years, including the Hellenic one. These priorities will need to be developed in their full potential, while respecting the integrity of the Single Market.

In this framework, progress on the following building blocks will be emphasized as follows:

- The promotion of the banking union, by the adoption of its cornerstone legislative piece, the Single Resolution Mechanism Regulation, before the end to the European Parliament's current legislature.
- Further progress concerning the effective implementation and further integration of the new EU/Eurozone economic governance mechanisms so as to enhance synergies between member-states in a growth- and jobs-friendly way, including by facilitating discussions on the establishment of the Partnerships for Growth, Jobs and Competitiveness.
- We will strive to lay the foundations of an ever-prosperous, well coordinated EMU, with the right balance between solidity and solidarity. This new Eurozone would put a definite end to the instability and uncertainty observed in particular in the "periphery".
- Special emphasis will be attached to the social dimension of the EMU, as one of the pillars for its further deepening. For the first time, the social dimension of the EMU will be integrated in the 2014 European Semester cycle.
- At the same time, we will need to work towards the strengthening of an institutional structure that would ensure enhanced transparency, accountability, national ownership and credibility towards the citizens of Europe. This dimension entails particular importance as an answer to the demographic and fiscal crisis of the European welfare state.

## **3. Migration-Borders-Mobility**

Instability in the European periphery, together with the perseverance of the causes that lead to immigration flows into Europe, increase these flows and place an extra burden on EU member states, in a period of economic crisis, when all forces and efforts should be focused on reforms aiming at safeguarding stability and revitalizing growth. This burden falls mainly on the EU member-states that are at Europe's external borders, as well as on those heavily affected by recession and unemployment.

In this context, the Hellenic Presidency will concentrate its efforts at highlighting the positive aspects of a comprehensive migration management to the benefit of boosting growth and will spare no efforts in promoting all dimensions of migration and mobility policies. At the



same time, action is envisaged to tackle the problems arising from illegal migration in economy, social cohesion and political stability.

More specifically:

Since its launch in 2005 the Global Approach constitutes the main framework for EU policy and action in the area of the external relations in the field of Migration and Asylum. The renewed Global Approach on Migration and Mobility focuses on four operational priorities: i) better organizing legal migration and fostering well managed mobility ii) preventing and combating illegal migration and eradicating trafficking in human beings iii) maximizing the development impact of migration and mobility iv) promoting international protection and enhancing the external dimension of asylum.

Developing an area of freedom, security and justice has been and will continue to be a major objective for the EU. Today that Europe is facing multi-faceted challenges, it is more than necessary to reinforce the common European policy on the areas of Justice and Home Affairs. Such a common policy must be founded on genuine solidarity, joint responsibility and cooperation between member states.

#### **Maritime Policies - A thematic that will run horizontally through the Presidency's priorities**

The Sea is an area of privileged knowledge and action for Greece and an inexhaustible source of growth and prosperity for the whole of Europe.

Being a traditionally maritime country, Greece acknowledges the great potential and opportunity that marine and maritime activities hold for the EU economy as a whole, on the condition of sustainability. At the same time, Europe has obvious strategic interests that justify the urge to bring to the fore and deal with security problems of sea borders management.

In this context, Greece introduces an horizontal thematic that will run through all three of the presidency's priorities, namely the EU Maritime Policies.

The main idea of this thematic is to redefine and re-launch the EU Maritime Policy in all its aspects. Building upon the work of previous Presidencies and, in particular, the Cyprus Presidency (Limassol declaration) and combining it with the security dimension tackled in the forthcoming Commission-EEAS Communication on a European Maritime Security Strategy.

Objective: Adoption of a text on Maritime Policies at the June 2014 European Council, highlighting the two dimensions: security and growth, including energy.

In this context, the Hellenic Presidency will endeavor to promote the following actions:

1. Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) in the "Marine and Maritime Agenda for Growth and Jobs". The Hellenic Presidency will work to promote the European Commission initiatives, as these are set in "Blue Growth, opportunities for marine and maritime sustainable growth" (the IMP's contribution to achieving the goals set on the Europe 2020 Strategy), in continuation of the Limassol Declaration (IMP relaunch) and the GAC Conclusions (December 2012) in this sector ("Marine and Maritime Agenda for growth and jobs"). Draft conclusions on IMP, expected to be adopted in June 2014, include references to all relevant issues, namely blue energy, aquaculture, seabed mapping, exploitation of marine mineral resources, blue biotechnology and environmental issues and insularity. In the draft text, the dimension of intersectional and trans-border cooperation in the Sea could be added as a priority, with special emphasis on actions to be taken for further promoting the European Coast Guard Functions Forum (see no.6 below).





2. Maritime Spatial Planning. The Hellenic Presidency will play a decisive part in the adoption of the proposed Directive by the European Commission aiming at improving maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal regions management in EU member-states.

3. EU Maritime Transport Policy. Given the importance of Maritime activities in the efforts for the recovery of the European economy and its overall contribution to EU wealth production, our goal is to update the relevant EU strategy on Maritime Transport until 2018, in light of the recent international developments (Asian economies' booming, developments in the maritime markets, boosting job creation in the wider maritime activities). Considering the fact that a mid term review has been requested by the Member States to the Commission until the end of 2013 according to the Council Conclusions in March 2009, emphasis is attributed to a respective follow up regarding Council Conclusions on maritime transport policy (mid-term review).

4. EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR). In implementation of the December 2012 EC Conclusions –in which it was decided to prepare an EU Macro-Regional Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region- preparation of the EUSAIR has been launched. Maritime & Marine growth, Transport, Environment, and Tourism comprise the four pillars of the EUSAIR. The Commission is expected to adopt and present the Communication and the Action Plan to the Council during Spring 2014. The Hellenic Presidency considers the EU Macro-Region Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region as a priority and, in this context, will organize a Stakeholder Conference to promote it.

5. Maritime Security Strategy (MSS). The preparations for a joint European Commission/High Representative Communication on elements for an EU Maritime Security Strategy are underway (to be presented by early in 2014). The joint Communication is expected to address both internal as well as external aspects of EU maritime security and promote global solutions in dealing with maritime security challenges of European concern; in this context, all EU and member-states' capabilities should be fully exploited and relevant coordination should be sought. An actual EU Maritime Security Strategy is expected to be adopted during the Hellenic Presidency (June 2014 European Council).

6. Cooperation of Coast Guard functions. Our goal is the introduction of the issue to the Council Conclusions presented for Integrated Maritime Policy. During the European Coast Guard Functions Forum 2012-2013, under Hellenic Chairmanship, the adopted Conclusions of the 5<sup>th</sup> Plenary stressed the need for better cooperation in this field.

7. Maritime and Coastal Tourism. The European Commission is preparing a Communication to set up an EU Strategy on Maritime and Coastal Tourism. The Hellenic Presidency will promote all initiatives on this field by, among other actions, organizing a High Level Conference on Maritime and Coastal Tourism.

8. Sea-borne Migration. It constitutes a sensitive issue, due to its obvious importance for European security. Our goal is to promote this issue, inter alia, in the framework of the third priority of the Hellenic Presidency (Migration, Borders, Mobility).



## Council Configurations

*The Council of the European Union brings together the Ministers of the 28 EU Member States. It convenes under ten different configurations, each responsible for one of the policy areas under EU competence.*

### General Affairs Council (GAC)

*In its General Affairs configuration, the Council deals with dossiers that affect more than one of the Union's policies, such as negotiations on EU enlargement, preparation of the Union's multi-annual budgetary perspective or institutional and administrative issues. It co-ordinates the preparation for and follow-up to meetings of the European Council. It also exercises a role in coordinating work on different policy areas carried out by the Council's other configurations, and handles any dossier entrusted to it by the European Council.*

*Given its role of coordination and general oversight of EU policies, the General Affairs Council configuration brings together the Ministers of Foreign or European Union Affairs of the EU Member States on a monthly basis.*

### Growth and Jobs

With unemployment at a record high and the fragile economic recovery, we need to pursue our efforts for ensuring sustainable recovery and stability. Growth is a prerequisite for responding to today's most pressing issue, unemployment. The present level of unemployment is economically and socially not sustainable.

The EU 2020 Strategy, the Compact for Growth and Jobs adopted at the European Council of June 2012, the 2013-2020 MFF and the Economic Governance embedded into the European Semester constitute a privileged framework for promoting Growth, Jobs and Cohesion. The Hellenic Presidency is determined to pursue the accomplishment of our common goals which will be closely monitored by our Heads of Governments and State.

The Hellenic Presidency will spare no effort in pursuing the objective of further EU deepening for appropriately responding to the present crisis situation. We are determined to avoid the risk of undermining our achievements, so far, in the European unification process and the overriding risk of destabilization, due to the economic crisis. Recovery can only be robust and sustainable if it encompasses all M-S.

Financing of the real economy is an overarching objective. During the 1<sup>st</sup> Semester 2014, the Hellenic Presidency will monitor the implementation of the Joint Initiative of the European Commission and EIB, presented to our Heads of Governments and State at the EC of June 2013, on financing the SMEs (SMEs Initiative) and further exploit solutions included therein. The implementation of this initiative can substantially promote Growth and Jobs.

We will further pursue our work, within the Council, on the Long Term Financing of the European Economy which could benefit both SMEs and infrastructure projects, in close cooperation with the European Commission and EIB.

In the course of the 1<sup>st</sup> semester, we will proceed to the stocktaking of Europe 2020 Headline Targets. The full midterm review will be accomplished during the second semester. It will prepare the ground for better focusing EU policies on Growth, Jobs and Competitiveness objectives.

Close monitoring of the implementation of the Compact of Growth and Jobs, as agreed in June 2012, will be pursued as a major tool for re-launching growth, investment, employment as well as for making Europe more competitive. The Hellenic Presidency will spare no effort on ensuring that the potential of the Compact is fully exploited by keeping under regular



review the accomplishment of the targets included therein. All policies, relevant to Growth and Jobs, will be further promoted, namely, deepening the Single Market, the Digital Single Market, the Energy Market, the European Research Area, Innovation, Investments for Growth and External Trade.

Recent crisis has clearly demonstrated the need for closer coordination of economic policies of M-S embedded into the European Semester which takes place at the first semester of the year. This allows for the ex ante -not ex post - diagnosis of imbalances that might have a negative spillover effect on the economies of other M-S. Structural adjustments in key sectors promoting Growth, Employment, Competitiveness and Cohesion will play a pivotal role in European Semester 2014.

The positive steps for deepening our cooperation, for responding to the crisis situation and for preventing that such a phenomenon is reproduced, need to be adjusted by the social parameter. It is now pressing to focus into the social implications of the crisis. The social dimension will be integrated, from now onwards, into the European Semester for better understanding social developments, in connection with the necessary fiscal consolidation.

We need to protect European citizens' rights, the fundamental right to work, and the European social model. The implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative, the improvement of mechanisms that allow surveillance, as well as restoring distortions in the labor market, in conjunction with structural reforms, create favorable conditions for a proper functioning of the market and the creation of jobs. Moreover, the Hellenic Presidency will focus on policies promoting social justice, as well as combating poverty and social exclusion.

#### ***Cohesion Policy / Regional Policy***

In the wake of the ongoing economic recession in Europe and as member states which experienced a persistent crisis are striving to return to growth, Cohesion policy assumes another importance: It has become a key instrument in supporting the main aims of Strategy Europe 2020 towards achieving a balanced and decentralized development that will eliminate regional disparities and promote interregional cooperation in the EU.

Under the circumstances, Europe must initiate the debate for an ambitious and integrated European Development Plan, designed so as to absorb the consequences of the crisis and enable the creation of sustainable jobs, according to Strategy 2020.

The Hellenic Presidency will devote its efforts in making the implementation of the framework of the legislative package of Cohesion Policy as effective as possible.

The decision to hold an Informal Meeting with the participation of Ministers in charge of the Cohesion Policy (April 2014) signals the priority we attach to this policy and the contribution of this policy to fighting recession and unemployment. The Hellenic Presidency wishes for this meeting to be an actual workshop where Member-States' questions regarding provisions of the new regulation can be addressed. The commission's contribution will be essential as useful directions will be given for the quick and efficient implementation of the new programs according to the new regulation.

Macro-regional strategies under European Territorial Cooperation will also be brought in the spotlight, as the Presidency is co-organizing, together with the Commission, a Conference to form a strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Macro-region, in February 2014.

#### ***European Semester***

EU has taken significant steps to enhance economic policy coordination and surveillance within the Union. In this respect, the European Semester, an annual cycle of EU level coordination, has been launched in January 2011. Having recognized the importance of this



coordinating process, the Hellenic Presidency will work to ensure the smooth operation of the 4th European Semester 2014, also encouraging a further involvement of National Parliaments.

The European Semester integrates the multilateral fiscal and macroeconomic surveillance with the implementation of policies that foster smart, sustainable and inclusive jobs-creating growth in the EU, in line with the June 2010 "Europe 2020". The aim is to prevent future crises and to deal effectively with the current one. The European Semester process has been characterized by enhanced central monitoring and oversight over member-states policies.

Significant progress has been achieved in the structural / growth-enhancing pillar of the European Semester, in thematic areas such as competitiveness, employment, health and social policy, towards meeting the "Europe 2020" Strategy's headline targets. The European Council is responsible for steering the implementation of both the "Europe 2020" Strategy and the June 2012 Compact for Growth and Jobs, through the European Semester process.

The coordination that takes place in the context of the European Semester is also an important step towards the EU Integration and the EMU deepening.

During the 4th European Semester 2014, the European Council will examine the first Commission's assessment (November 2013) of the implementation of country-specific recommendations (CSRs) by Eurozone Member States at the stage of national budgets' drafting and before their submission to national parliamentary debate (according to the "two pack" legislation, entered into force on 15.10.2013). The relevant Commission's Opinions are included in the so called Annual Growth Survey Package or Autumn Economic Governance Package.

Moreover, the opening of the debate on the interim evaluation of the 'Europe 2020' Strategy has entered the agenda of the Spring European Council (March 2014).

Delivering on the December 2013 European Council's Conclusions to strengthen national ownership in the implementation of the CSRs, the Hellenic Presidency will work to promote the shared analysis of the economic situation in the EU Member States, and the euro area in particular. We will also spare no efforts to advance the Social Dimension of EMU on the basis of Social Indicators and Scoreboard analyzed in the Joint Employment Report, published by the Commission as an annex to the Annual Growth Survey 2014.

The objectives of the European Semester 2014 Roadmap, presented in the General Affairs Council on November 19, 2013, are to ensure that all relevant Council formations (ECOFIN, EPSCO, COMPET, ENVIRONMENT, EDUCATION, JHA) work in a coordinated and consistent manner towards a thorough preparation of the March and June European Councils and to enable the General Affairs Council to oversee the process, taking into account the time constraints set by the European elections and the Commission's term limits.

The Hellenic Presidency will ensure that the Annual Growth Survey's priorities and guidance will be discussed extensively in the Council formations during January and February, and will prepare, in cooperation with the Commission, a Synthesis Report to be submitted to the March European Council. The last one has been dedicated, since 2000, to debates on issues relating to growth, employment and competitiveness.

In April, the discussion will focus on the Stability or Convergence Programmes (under the Stability and Growth Pact) and the National Reform Programmes (in the context of the Integrated Guidelines for the implementation of the "Europe 2020" Strategy). Furthermore, during the same period, the Commission, on the basis of "in depth reviews", will conclude whether imbalances, and potentially excessive imbalances, exist and put forward the appropriate policy recommendations. The Alert Mechanism Report 2014, also included in



the Annual Growth Survey package, has already identified the m-s for which further analysis (in the form of an in-depth review) is deemed necessary in order to decide whether an imbalance in need of policy action exists.

In the 4th European Semester 2014, the Commission will also provide a first overview of the implementation of CSRs across Member States. The relevant document, that also accompanies the annual Growth Survey 2014, will form the basis for closer bilateral cooperation between the Commission and m-s, prior to the CSRs' adoption.

The Hellenic Presidency looks forward to constructive cooperation between the Commission and m-s at all stages of the process, to strengthen national ownership of reforms in m-s.

The CSRs and a specific Recommendation for Eurozone as a whole will be published after the European Parliament Elections of 22nd -25th May 2014, in order to be endorsed by the June 2014 European Council and be formally adopted in July by the ECOFIN.

### **Enlargement**

Enlargement has been a success story for the European Union and Europe as a whole. It has helped to overcome the division of Europe and contributed to peace and stability throughout the continent. Today, at a time when the European Union faces major challenges, the enlargement process continues to play a key role and allows the EU to be better positioned to address global challenges and pursue its strategic interests.

At the same time, the prospect of accession drives political and economic reforms, transforms societies, consolidates the rule of law and creates new opportunities for citizens and business in those European countries who want to become part of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, built on shared values and principles, including respect for fundamental rights, functioning of democratic institutions based on rule of law, commitment to regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations.

The accession process today is more rigorous and comprehensive than in the past, reflecting the evolution of EU policies as well as lessons learned from previous enlargements. In accordance with the renewed consensus on enlargement of December 2006, the process is built on strict but fair conditionality at all stages of the negotiations, with progress towards membership dependent on the steps taken by each country to meet the established criteria and the respective results and with each country being judged on its own merits.

In this context, the Hellenic Presidency is willing and committed to continue the ongoing accession negotiations.

As regards Montenegro, the launch of accession negotiations marked the opening of a new stage on its path to the EU. Following the conclusion of the screening process and building further on the progress made, the Hellenic Presidency is determined to support Montenegro in order to achieve significant progress in the accession negotiations, provided that all necessary conditions have been met.

Greece intends to encourage Turkey to continue reforms, in order to be able to maintain the momentum in the accession negotiations, created with the opening of a fourteenth chapter. Furthermore, the Presidency will engage in efforts to bring tangible results, in accordance with the established procedures, in Turkey's Negotiating Framework and relevant Council Conclusions.

The Presidency will ensure that the enlargement agenda in the Western Balkans remains high among its priorities. The EU's unequivocal commitment to the European perspective of the Western Balkans remains essential for the stability, reconciliation and future of the region. A clear perspective of EU membership for all Western Balkan countries, granted at



the Thessaloniki Summit of 2003, is subject to the fulfilment of the necessary conditions, including those of the Stabilisation and Association Process, which remains the common framework for EU relations with the Western Balkans until accession.

The Hellenic Presidency is determined to contribute to the promotion of measures aimed at boosting growth, competitiveness and employment in the region, while promoting its European integration.

The Hellenic Presidency stands ready to implement the European Council's decision to open accession negotiations with Serbia and to contribute to the decisive advancement of these negotiations.

The Presidency is determined to contribute to the momentum of enlargement in the Western Balkans and support the advancement of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina to the next stage of their respective EU paths, according to their own merits and based on conditionality and the established procedures.

#### ***Non EU Western Europe***

The presidency will work toward promoting EU's efforts for closer cooperation with the EEA/EFTA states. Efforts should be stepped up to incorporate outstanding internal market legislation in Norway and Iceland, to opening negotiations in the EEA on a new agreement foreseeing progressive liberalization of agricultural trade and to open negotiations for the renewal of the EEA Financial Mechanism. Negotiations with Switzerland are expected to be launched and conducted in an expeditious manner for an institutional framework agreement to replace the burdensome framework of the existing bilateral agreements. Also for the small states, the Principality of Andorra, the Principality of Monaco and the Republic of San Marino, options for their participation in the EU Internal Market should be discussed further with the aim to reach an agreement.

#### ***Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP)***

Being a traditionally maritime country, with more than 13.500 km of coastline and about 2.500 islands, Greece attributes great importance to sea-related activities and issues. Indeed, as already mentioned, marine and maritime policies will constitute a horizontal thematic that will run through and inform all other Hellenic Presidency priorities.

In this context, the Presidency will seek the adoption of General Affairs Council Conclusions on Integrated Maritime Policy. The EU IMP is an important tool in meeting the objectives of Europe2020 Strategy. The marine and maritime agenda for growth and jobs endorsed in Limassol in October 2012 is an important step towards the further development and implementation of this innovative cross-cutting policy. Our objective is to further develop and accentuate the marine, maritime and sea dimension in all other sectoral policies of the EU.

As already mentioned above (page 13), the promotion of insularity will be of particular interest. Also, within the IMP framework, the Presidency will pursue the initiation and completion of negotiations with the European Parliament on the Proposal for a Directive for the Establishment of a Framework regarding Maritime Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Management.

#### ***Cyber Security***

Cyber Security is an important component of Europe's Common Security and Defence Policy and an issue of increasing international interest. Critical infrastructures –ranging from banking and finance, power grids, transportation and telecommunications networks, up to national defence and security– are nowadays heavily dependent on the use of Information



Technologies. The contemporary threats that exist in cyber space should be confronted through the cooperation of all sectors of society (public, private, government, academia), in both a proactive as well as a reactive way. Whatever the action taken, it requires the implementation of interoperable technologies and procedures.

Against this background and in order to highlight the importance of the issue, the Hellenic Presidency intends to conduct specific and tailor-made inter-ministerial activities which will cover both the strategic-conceptual and the operational-tactical levels of this domain.

### ***Nuclear Safety***

Greece recognizes the importance of nuclear safety and supports the initiatives and actions taken towards its strengthening at both international and European level. The Presidency supports the European Commission legislative initiative for the revision of the European Directive on Nuclear Safety, taking into account lessons learned from the Fukushima nuclear accident and the findings of the stress tests performed in the European nuclear power plants. The priority of the Presidency in this field is the adoption by the Council of the Amendment of the Nuclear Safety Directive 71/2009.

### ***Institutional Issues***

The reform of the General Court, and specifically the increase of the number of judges in the General Court, remains a top concern for the Hellenic Presidency. Most controversial issues that remain to be solved are those related to the exact number of “additional” judges and the system of appointment.

Given the recent failure to achieve an agreement, the Hellenic Presidency intends to reintroduce the Court’s contribution as presented in June 2013 by the President of the Court at COREPER meeting. Any possible modification of this proposal could be the subject of a compromise proposal to be prepared by the Hellenic Presidency, with the aim of finally reaching an agreement.

The Court is expected to present by the end of this year the amendments of the rules of procedure of the General Court and the Civil Service Tribunal. We intend to initiate discussions on these proposals with a view to arriving to their adoption, at the level of the Council’s working group, by the end of our Presidency.

Furthermore, the Hellenic Presidency attaches great importance to the proposed Regulation on the statute and funding of European Political Parties and Foundations and will strive for possible conclusion of the file until the end of the current legislative term.

Finally, upon completion by the Lithuanian Presidency of the review of the EEAS mandate and the evaluation of its achievements during its first term of operation since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, the Hellenic Presidency will encourage further work on enhancing its efficiency and effectiveness.



### Foreign Affairs Council (FAC)

*The Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) is responsible for the EU's external action, ranging from foreign policy and defence to trade, development cooperation and humanitarian aid. It defines and implements the EU's foreign and security policy on the basis of the guidelines set by the European Council. Together with the [High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy](#), the Council ensures the unity, consistency and effectiveness of the Union's external action.*

*Depending on its agenda, the Council comprises the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defense, Trade, Development of the 28 EU Member States. As a general rule, the Foreign Affairs Council convenes on a monthly basis.*

*According to the Lisbon Treaty, the Foreign Affairs Council (including the Defense and Development Ministers configurations) is presided by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, who is thus responsible for the Council's priorities, as these have been defined in the 18-month Trio Programme of the Irish, Lithuanian and Hellenic Presidencies. The Hellenic Presidency intends to cooperate closely both with the High Representative and the European External Action Service (EEAS), so as to ensure the effective and consistent implementation of the EU's common foreign and security policy.*

### Common Foreign and Security Policy

At the outset of her mandate, the High Representative set three priorities for the EU's common foreign policy: a) the establishment of the European External Action Service, b) the promotion of democracy, stability and prosperity with Europe's neighbours, and c) building strong and strategic partnerships with existing and emerging global players. These three priorities will continue to guide EU action during the Hellenic Presidency, thus ensuring the consistency and coherence of EU foreign policy.

In this context, Greece will place particular importance on the Union's continuing assistance to the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, some of them undergoing a delicate transition process, and on strengthening the Union's cooperation with regional organizations and initiatives, most notably with the League of Arab States, in view of the third Ministerial meeting between the two organizations, expected to take place during the Hellenic Presidency.

Greece also attaches great importance to the Union's strategic partnership with Africa. It will contribute so as to further enhance and expand the EU-Africa dialogue and cooperation at all levels, in view of the EU-Africa Summit scheduled to take place during the Hellenic Presidency, in April 2014, in Brussels.

Another area of particular importance for Greece is maintaining the Union's central role in the Western Balkans, where the European perspective keeps on acting as a catalyst for both domestic reform and regional cooperation. Greece will continue to support the ongoing Dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina and its implementation, as facilitated by the High Representative.

Of special interest to Greece is also the deepening of the Union's engagement with its Strategic Partners, in particular the US, Russia, as well as China, in view of the EU-China 2020 Strategic Plan for Cooperation. Cooperation with India, Japan and South Korea is also deemed important. Relations with Australia and New Zealand will also be further enhanced.

In the field of international terrorism, and in accordance with the four pillars of the European Union's Counter-Terrorism Strategy (prevention, protection, pursuit and





response), Greece will seek substantial progress in the fields of: 1) prevention and combating of radicalization and recruitment, and 2) fight against terrorism financing.

### ***Common Security and Defence Policy***

Greece supports the further development of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). In this context, Greece underlines the need to strengthen the EU's credibility and effectiveness as a global actor and a security provider. This can be achieved through the enhancement of the EU's unique comprehensive ability to address security challenges, as well as to prevent and manage crises. It also stresses the need to enhance the development of the EU's capabilities, both civilian and military, as they underpin the EU's ability to act as a security provider. To sustain Europe's capabilities, it remains crucial to have a more integrated, sustainable, innovative and competitive European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB).

Greece attaches particular importance to the enhancement of the effectiveness, visibility and impact of CSDP. In this context, it highlights the need for further enhancing the EU military rapid response capabilities, including the EU Battlegroups. In this context, it will actively contribute to the work on addressing all aspects related to the use of the EU BGs, including the relevant financial aspects.

Greece underlines the importance of improving the EU's ability to respond to emerging security challenges, placing a special focus on Maritime Security Strategy, which is included in the horizontal thematic that will run through the Hellenic Presidency's priorities, namely "the EU Maritime Policies". Building on the successful efforts of the Cypriot and Irish Presidencies and following the relevant December 2013 European Council Conclusions, the Hellenic Presidency intends to actively contribute to the elaboration of an EU Maritime Security Strategy, to be adopted by June 2014, on the basis of elements provided by a Joint Communication from the European Commission and the High Representative.

Greece emphasizes the need to develop CSDP support to border management as part of a wider and more joined-up EU approach to help third states and regions better manage their borders.

In this vein, Greece will work towards a holistic and in-depth analysis of all aspects of Sustainability in Defense (SiD). It will focus on the factors that may affect sustainability, including climate change and its implications, estimation of life cycle, interaction of pillars of sustainable and green development (especially environment, society and economy), environmental protection and preservation, and, finally, energy efficiency and security, as well as cost effectiveness.

As far as Space Policy is concerned, emphasis will be put on space situation awareness, space law and the utilization of space assets and space products, both by military and non-military users, in the framework of CSDP.

The Hellenic Presidency underlines the importance of continuing to strengthen the ties between CSDP and Freedom/Security/Justice (FSJ) actors, so as to foster a greater understanding of respective objectives and ensure mutual benefits. This will, inter alia, help us all to cope with important horizontal issues, such as illegal migration, organized crime and terrorism.

In the field of civilian crisis management, Greece will work towards further improving the planning, conduct and support of civilian CSDP missions. The implementation of the roadmap on improving civilian CSDP management is quite important in this regard.



Training and education are instrumental in improving the visibility of CSDP, as well as promoting a common security and defense culture. Greece supports the respective role of the European Security and Defense College. The EU Initiative for the exchange of young cadets inspired by Erasmus, launched in 2008, is a fundamental contribution to this common culture and we believe it should be revitalized.

The development of the EU's capabilities is an essential factor for the realization of the Union's full potential as a security provider. The role of the European Defense Agency, which Greece strongly supports, is very important in this context. Greece intends to build on the relevant December 2013 European Council Conclusions, with a focus on RPAS, Cyber and Space Policy issues.

With regard to Europe's defense industry, Greece underlines the need to strengthen Europe's Defense Technological and Industrial Base, so as to ensure EU's strategic autonomy, as well as operational effectiveness and security of supply, whilst stimulating jobs, innovation and growth across the EU. Greece gives particular emphasis on cross-border market access for SMEs, which are an important element in the defense supply chain.

### *European Neighbourhood Policy*

One of the key priorities of the Hellenic Presidency is the further enhancement of the dialogue and cooperation between the EU and the Southern Mediterranean countries in the framework of the Southern Dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP); supporting these countries' efforts towards both the consolidation of democratic institutions and their socio-economic development remains high on the Hellenic Presidency's agenda. Greece will offer its full support to the President of the European Council, the European Commission, the EEAS and the E.U. Special Representative for the Southern Mediterranean region to accomplish these objectives.

The promotion of the political transition process and socio-economic development, through the new "Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity", initiated by the EU on March 2011 in the framework of a novel and ambitious ENP, offers mutual benefits and will contribute further to a wide range of political, economic and social reforms in the Mediterranean partner countries. This will have a direct positive impact on the EU, since the developments taking place in the countries of its Southern Neighbourhood are not strictly regional, having implications of strategic importance for the broader euro-mediterranean space in economic (trade, energy, migration), political (security, stability) and social (human rights, gender, culture, youth) terms.

Greece believes that time is necessary for the transition process to produce sustainable results and, although it can prove more complicated than expected, the EU should maintain a high level of commitment in its relations with its Mediterranean partners. In order to be effective, we should take into consideration developments on the ground.

Given the complex and fragile situation in the region, Greece will seek to, at the very least, maintain the current distribution of funding between the two dimensions of the ENP in the initial allocations for the next programming period. Any decrease in funding for Southern Mediterranean partner countries would be perceived as a change in EU policy towards our Southern Neighbours and would be in contradiction with the relevant commitments taken two years ago. It remains essential that funding decisions continue to be primarily based on objective criteria and that some form of fixed range defines the percentage of European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) bilateral funding.

The Presidency will duly focus on the further development and strengthening of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). It is the objective of Greece to see this unique and inclusive



forum to act as a catalyst for democratic transition and socio-economic development in the wider area of the Mediterranean, through the consistent implementation of concrete projects, bringing tangible benefits for the peoples of the region.

Greece will work to sustain the EU's engagement in the Eastern Partnership (EaP), which constitutes a specific dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy, with a view to assisting the efforts of interested partners towards political association and economic integration. The peaceful settlement of the conflicts in Transnistria (Moldova), Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Georgia) and Nagorno-Karabakh (Armenia/Azerbaijan) remain high on the EU's political agenda.

### **Common Trade Policy**

Trade is a key driver for economic growth, competitiveness and job creation. Trade liberalization is a basic tool for the achievement of Europe2020's objectives of smart, inclusive and sustainable growth.

EU trade policy should focus on trade liberalization of goods, services and investment, on the protection of intellectual property rights, the enhancement of Market Access Strategy, a more reciprocal approach on public procurement policy between the EU and its partners, a dismantling of trade barriers and an unrestricted trade of raw materials and energy. Furthermore, the EU should always consider the special needs of the SMEs, as the main economic operators in many member states. Yet, because of their small size, they inevitably lack opportunities in order to successfully compete in third countries' markets.

On foreign trade policy, bilateral strategic and regional cooperation negotiations will continue to be among the EU's first line priorities. The Hellenic Presidency will continue to support the negotiation and delivery of balanced trade and investment agreements between the EU and third countries. Deep and Comprehensive Trade and Economic Partnership Agreements constitute instruments able to advance economic integration and regulatory convergence, thus contributing to the creation of a positive business environment. Enhancing EU's trade relations is crucial for boosting much needed growth and employment, in our efforts to overcome the current economic crisis.

In this context, our neighbouring countries in the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe, as well as in the Caucasus and Central Asia, are our priority interlocutors.

The Presidency will aim at the opening or advancement of negotiations on the conclusion of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (D.C.F.T.As) with selected Southern Mediterranean Partners (Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia) on the basis of the negotiating directives adopted by the Council in December 2011 (F.A.C./Trade Conclusions, 14/2/2011).

Particular importance is attributed to a deeper understanding and cooperation, including through free trade and investment talks, with major economic partners such as USA, Canada, Japan, Russia, India and China.

More specifically, Greece will place, during its Presidency of the EU, a special focus on the EU-US trade relationship, with the aim of advancing the negotiations on a new generation Transatlantic Trade and Investment Agreement, that can serve as a model of a 21<sup>st</sup> century Free Trade Agreement. The Hellenic Presidency will also place special focus on the finalization of the conclusion of the negotiations on the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement with Canada.

Furthermore, during the Hellenic Presidency, the EU will seek to advance the EU-China relationship, in view of the EU-China 2020 Strategic Plan for Cooperation, with a focus on achieving progress in the Geographical Indications Agreement, investment protection and



market access. Greece will also seek to advance the Free Trade Agreement negotiations with Japan, especially in light of the review clause in the negotiations, which is to be assessed during the first semester of 2014.

Enhanced cooperation with ACP members, Latin American and Asian countries also constitute a major interest for the EU.

Increased protection of European high-quality agricultural products will remain an EU priority as far as the whole range of trade negotiations is concerned, since it is closely linked to the structural adjustment of European agriculture, as well as the successful access of traditional EU high added-value food products to international markets.

The Hellenic Presidency would also like to highlight the maritime aspect of trade policy. Seaborne trade constitutes 90 percent of total trade between the EU and third countries and 40 percent of intra-EU trade, thus making it a determining factor of EU economic growth and prosperity and a guarantor of the smooth flow of European imports and exports worldwide. Bearing all these in mind, the Presidency will work to ensure that all EU trade agreements with third countries contain standard articles on maritime transport and on the liberalization of maritime services in particular.

Furthermore, the EU remains committed to the WTO's multilateral rules-based trading system and the fight against protectionist tendencies worldwide. The Hellenic Presidency will support the ongoing work regarding the DDA process, with a view to setting up the conditions for a future ambitious progress, on the basis of the single undertaking principle. Our strategy should also take into consideration the special role of emerging economies. Big influential economies, like China, Brazil or India, should be encouraged to upgrade their involvement in the multilateral process.

Finally, the Presidency will support the follow-up of the ongoing process regarding the modernization of EU trade defense instruments and the conclusion of the legislative procedure for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the exercise of the Union's rights for the application and enforcement of international trade rules, as well as for the Regulation for the financial responsibility for investor/state dispute settlement. Presidency will also follow the smooth implementation of the Generalized System of Preferences' (GSP) new rules that are coming into force at the beginning of 2014.

### ***Development Policy***

The Hellenic Presidency will continue efforts to address key issues related to the shaping of the post-2015 development agenda. The Presidency will take stock of progress achieved in relevant UN processes and other relevant international fora and seek to promote a constructive EU contribution to all ongoing processes, with the aim of supporting their convergence into a coherent, single overarching post-2015 framework.

At the start of the EU's multiannual financial framework for the period 2014-2020 and in light of preparations for the post-2015 agenda, the Hellenic Presidency will focus on the role of the private sector in development. Modalities will be explored for supporting private sector development in partner countries, as well as engaging more actively with the private sector to tackle the challenges of eradicating poverty and boosting inclusive and sustainable growth.

In line with the "Agenda for Change", the "Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy" and its Action Plan, the Hellenic Presidency will focus on promoting a rights-based approach to development cooperation, encompassing all human rights, in view of integrating this approach into EU operational activities for development cooperation.



Taking into account that 2015 will be a pivotal year for development, the Hellenic Presidency will negotiate on behalf of the Council to reach agreement with the European Parliament on a Commission Proposal for a Decision aimed at declaring 2015 the European Year of Development.

In the context of the Cotonou partnership between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states, the Hellenic Presidency will conclude the legislative work in the EU Council and pursue all necessary institutional preparations so as to prepare the ground for the rapid implementation of the 11th European Development Fund (EDF).

The Hellenic Presidency will also continue the discussions on promoting Private Sector Development in ACP countries that remains a top priority of the EU development policy. In this respect, the Hellenic Presidency will seek to give further impetus to the ongoing discussions, with a view to setting a more efficient Private Sector Development framework for the ACP countries.

Further to the strong relation between security and development, adoption of the EU triennial action plan (2014-2016) for the African Peace Facility will be among the first priorities of the Hellenic Presidency in January-February 2014. As far as the V(Vulnerability)-FLEX Mechanism is concerned, Greece will assist the Commission in its initiative so as to allow for the creation of a new shock absorption mechanism combining the FLEX (Annex II of the Cotonou Agreement) and the current V-FLEX Mechanism.

The integration of V-FLEX into the operational development context is regarded as highly important with a view to strengthening resilience in the most vulnerable countries. In the light of the above, the new methodological parameters of V-FLEX will contribute to a more comprehensive approach towards coping with the challenges of climate change and food security.

The Hellenic Presidency will closely follow the progress of the negotiations between the EU and the regional ACP sub-groups aiming at concluding comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) at regional level. The Hellenic Presidency endorses the EPAs main objectives that are poverty reduction, sustainable economic and social development and the smooth and gradual integration of ACP countries into the world economy.

The Hellenic Presidency attaches great importance to Article 13 (migration) of the Cotonou Agreement as well as to the process of the ACP-EU dialogue on migration and development. It, thus, supports the strengthening of the aforesaid process and the efforts of both Parties to implement the recommendations that have been agreed upon.

The Hellenic Presidency will continue the reflection on the Post-Cotonou (Post-2020) era and make efforts to stimulate the EU internal process on this matter. Last but not least, the Hellenic Presidency will be co-chairing the ACP-EU Joint Committee of Ambassadors (JCA) and the ACP-EU Joint Council of Ministers (JCM) that examine the current topics of the ACP-EU partnership. The Hellenic Presidency will also welcome the 27th ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA) to be held in Strasbourg, France (17-19 March 2014).

### **Humanitarian Aid**

The Hellenic Presidency will focus on further strengthening coordination within the EU, in order to ensure that EU humanitarian assistance to man-made emergencies and natural disasters is delivered in the most efficient, effective and timely manner possible. Strengthened coordination will be based on a common assessment of humanitarian needs and gaps in the international response to humanitarian crises, enabling Member States and the Commission to make better informed decisions regarding their bilateral and EU humanitarian assistance. A common analysis of obstacles to the efficient delivery of aid will



be included in joint messaging vis-à-vis third parties, with the objective of stronger EU humanitarian advocacy. To this end, the Presidency will continue the Trio efforts to support, as appropriate, the work of other Council preparatory bodies. The Hellenic Presidency will also support efforts at UN level to strengthen and reform the international humanitarian system through the Transformative Agenda.

The Hellenic Presidency will further promote the linkages between humanitarian and development assistance. The chronic nature of vulnerability and the increasing frequency, severity and magnitude of natural and man-made disasters, such as in the case of the Syrian crisis, demonstrate the urgent need for a coherent and joint approach by both humanitarian and development actors, so as to reduce and manage humanitarian risks more effectively and diminish the overall need for humanitarian assistance. Policy work on disaster risk reduction, resilience, transition, preparedness, capacity building, as well as the opportunities offered by the private sector in implementing innovative approaches, will be central to the agenda of the Hellenic Presidency.

Concerning the specific initiatives and areas of work:

The Hellenic Presidency will ensure the initial stages for the successful implementation of the Regulation establishing the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps – EU Aid Volunteers, given that the ordinary legislative procedure has just been concluded under the Lithuanian Presidency. Furthermore, and in cooperation with the European Parliament and the Commission, the Presidency will organize a conference in Brussels, in order to assess the needs of implementing partners (sending and hosting organizations) with respect to deployment of volunteers, capacity building and technical assistance.

The Hellenic Presidency intends rendering COHAFA's discussions more strategic oriented and outcome-based, through common messaging on key topics of humanitarian crises in the respective countries, which could be taken up by other Council preparatory bodies when preparing Council Conclusions.

Contributing to the resilience agenda, the Hellenic Presidency will follow up the implementation of the Commission Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries 2013-2020. In coordination with the Council Development Cooperation Working Party (CODEV), COHAFA will support the implementation of the Action Plan at all levels, including a joint informal COHAFA/CODEV meeting in Athens (June 2014) for reinforcing, in particular, the links between humanitarian and development programs.



### **Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN)**

*The Economic and Financial Affairs Council, commonly known as the Ecofin Council, is one of the oldest Council configurations. It is composed of the Economics and Finance Ministers of the Member States, as well as Budget Ministers when budgetary issues are discussed, and meets on a monthly basis.*

*The first signs of gradual recovery of the European economy are now visible, following the coordinated efforts of the EU and the undertaking of initiatives towards the strengthening of coordination of the member states' economic and fiscal policies. Further progress in structural reforms, elimination of market fragmentation, as well as safeguarding the banking sector, will contribute to a faster economic recovery.*

*Greece, assuming the Presidency of the ECOFIN Council, will work towards further deepening of the EMU and strengthening of coordination of national economic and fiscal policies, in order to preserve the integrity of the common currency and promote the necessary growth-enhancing reforms.*

*Promoting the Banking Union will constitute the main objective of the Hellenic Presidency, which will contribute to restoring financial stability, improving the functioning of the internal market and strengthening public confidence in the financial system. The establishment of an effective Single Resolution Mechanism (SRM) will break the vicious circle between bank debt and public debt and will effectively shield the European financial system.*

*In the same context, the Hellenic Presidency will focus attention on how to strengthen the social dimension of the EMU, which constitutes one of the key pillars for integration in the Eurozone. Especially under the current circumstances, with persistent high unemployment and recession in several Member States, systematic monitoring of the social and labour market situation may significantly contribute towards the planning of the appropriate economic policies and the discussion on the future of EMU.*

*At the same time, the Hellenic Presidency will engage in discussions regarding the financing of the economy by particularly focusing on the facilitation of SMEs access to liquidity, aiming to boost sustainable growth and to create new jobs.*

*Finally, the Hellenic Presidency will work on the effective and thorough preparation of the G20 Ministers and Central Bank Governors' Meetings within the ECOFIN Council.*

### **Deepening of the EMU: Coordination of Economic Policies and Social Dimension**

The crisis in the economic and financial sector highlighted deficiencies and asymmetries of the EMU's architecture, while it demonstrated a high degree of interdependence between the EU economies.

The promotion of the banking union and the strengthening of economic policy coordination across the EU are expected to contribute to addressing these problems, as well as stimulating growth and employment.

The Hellenic Presidency will focus its efforts to achieving progress on the ex-ante coordination of economic reforms. It will also endeavour to facilitate discussions on setting up "Partnerships for Growth, Jobs and Competitiveness", which will provide incentives to promote structural reforms and investment in growth and job-enhancing policies in the Member States.

Besides the necessary coordination in the macroeconomic and fiscal fields, highlighting the social dimension of the EMU will be an issue of utmost importance for the Hellenic



Presidency, given that it constitutes a key pillar for the deepening of the EMU as agreed by the European leaders in December.

### ***Banking Union***

Completing the banking union is a prerequisite for strengthening trust, eliminating market fragmentation and increasing liquidity in the European economy, as well as the safeguarding of financial stability in Europe.

Following the final agreement recently reached by the legislators on the Deposit Guarantee Scheme Directive and the Bank Recovery and Resolution Directive, the Hellenic Presidency will seek further progress in the development of a new architecture for the European framework of financial supervision.

In the area of bank resolution, following the general approach reached by the Council on the Single Resolution Mechanism, which will be the cornerstone of the Banking Union, the Hellenic Presidency will carry out trilogues, with the aim to conclude negotiations with the European Parliament within the current parliamentary term. A fruitful co-operation both with the Council and the European Parliament will be of an utmost importance to a successful completion of this dossier.

Finally, the Presidency will provide for a smooth transition to the new institutional framework for banking supervision, ensuring that the new Single Supervisory Mechanism for credit institutions will be put into operation as from autumn 2014.

### ***European Semester***

The European Semester, which is being implemented since 2011 and is based on the provisions of the Stability and Growth Pact, constitutes the cornerstone of the enhanced EU framework for the integrated coordination and surveillance of the member-states' economic and fiscal policies.

The recent introduction of the two Regulations on economic governance (two-pack) has enriched the European Semester procedures, leading to a more integrated and coherent approach for the evaluation of the member-states' economic policies.

In this context, the Hellenic Presidency will seek to effectively manage the fourth European Semester, in order to ensure the credibility of the process and the systematic evaluation of reforms in EU Member States.

### ***Long – term financing of the economy***

Financing of the European economy has been based to a large extent on bank funding. During the financial crisis, long-term bank funding has been significantly decreased. This, consequently, leads to the need to explore, inter alia, alternative financing sources for the businesses.

Within this framework, the Hellenic Presidency intends to promote dialogue, based on follow-up actions to the Green Paper on long – term financing that the European Commission is planning to propose, in relation to the long-term financing of the economy and SMEs' facilitation of access to financing.

In parallel, the Presidency will give impetus to discussions for the financing of growth, on the basis of the recommendations of the High Level Expert Group, which were proposed following the invitation by the informal April 2013 ECOFIN Council.

In the same context and following the joint initiative of the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) for the financing of economy and, in particular, the facilitation of access to financing for SMEs (Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises), the





Presidency will assist the ECOFIN Council in monitoring the development of financing tools, aiming at enhancing sustainable growth and promoting the creation of new jobs.

Finally, the Hellenic Presidency will foster progress on the Long-term Investment Funds Regulation that relates to the financing of infrastructure projects and SMEs.

#### ***Reform of the financial sector supervisory framework***

The work of the Hellenic Presidency will aim to revise the regulatory framework for the supervision of the financial sector, in order to strengthen trust and increase liquidity in the European economy.

The Hellenic Presidency will contribute to a more secure and competitive European payments market, through promoting the revision of the legal framework for payment services, which will allow for lower charges, transparency and increased facilities for the benefit of consumers.

Promoting the creation of an EU Single Market on bank accounts will generate multiple benefits for consumers. In this respect, the Hellenic Presidency will work with the aim of adoption of the Proposal for a Directive on the comparability of fees related to payment accounts, payment account switching and access to payment accounts with basic features (PAD Directive).

At the same time, the Hellenic Presidency will also work to reach an agreement within the Council on the updated framework for combating money laundering and terrorist financing.

In the area of capital markets, the Presidency will give emphasis to the completion of work on legislative proposals, relating to the reform of capital markets supervision (Markets in Financial Instruments- MiFID/ MiFIR), as well as to the promotion of discussions on the benchmarking legislative proposal, which provides sufficient protection for both consumers and investors.

Regarding the insurance sector, the Hellenic Presidency will work on promoting coordination, transparency and supervision of the private and occupational insurance sector, and its selling practices, through the integration and implementation of relevant supervisory frameworks.

#### ***Taxation***

The Hellenic Presidency will draw guidance from the efforts of previous Presidencies to develop fairer tax systems, reinforce the fight against tax fraud and tax evasion and, in relation to third countries, promote the exchange of best practices, avoid harmful tax practices and exploit the full benefits of the internal market.

In this context, the Hellenic Presidency will effectively work towards a political agreement on the Directive of Administrative Cooperation for the extension of automatic exchange of information in early 2014 and pursue the adoption of the revised savings taxation Directive by March 2014. It will also take forward the work concerning the Directive on a Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base and the amendment of Parent-Subsidiary Directive.

In the area of indirect taxation, the Presidency will progress discussions on the Directive on VAT Treatment of Vouchers, as well as the Directive on a Standardized VAT Return, in order to simplify the VAT system and reduce the cost for enterprises and tax administrations. The Directive on Financial Transaction Tax, through enhanced cooperation, will be further progressed, as to ensure that the financial sector makes a fair contribution to the costs of the crisis.

Finally, the Presidency will focus on revising the Directive on Taxation of Energy Products.



***The annual EU Budget for 2014***

The Hellenic Presidency will aim at ensuring the smooth execution of the 2014 budget, on the basis of the principle of sound financial management, establishing the guidelines for the 2015 budget, by taking into account the need for realistic estimates, granting a discharge to the European Commission in respect of the 2012 budget execution and further elaborating and evaluating the future revision of own resources system, in order to ensure both continuity in the timely and smooth financing of EU's policies and its maximum contribution to the protection of the EU's economic interests.

***EU Representation in the G20***

The Hellenic Presidency will work on the effective and thorough preparation of the G20 Ministers and Central Bank Governors' Meetings within the ECOFIN Council. The Hellenic Presidency will contribute to the formulation of the EU's common position on G20 priority issues, such as economic growth and job creation, financing of long-term investments and tax transparency.



## Justice and Home Affairs Council (JHA)

*The Justice and Home Affairs Council (JHA) brings together the justice and home affairs Ministers of the EU Member States approximately every other month. The Council sets political directions and ensures the development and implementation of EU cooperation and common policies in cross-border issues in the area of freedom, security and justice.*

*Justice and Home Affairs has been the sector mostly affected by the entry in force of the Lisbon Treaty. The Council plays a key role in protecting the interests and needs of EU citizens and other EU residents.*

*One of the Hellenic Presidency's main priorities will be concentrating on future developments in the area of freedom, security and justice. The Presidency intends to work intensively, in cooperation with the European Commission and in consultation with the European Parliament, towards shaping the strategic objectives and general EU policy guidelines for legislative and operational planning for the period succeeding the Stockholm Programme. The Presidency aspires to have these post-Stockholm Strategic Guidelines presented and adopted at the June 2014 European Council.*

*2013 was designated as the European Year of Citizens. Based on the experience from the activities organized throughout 2013 and having assessed the conclusions drawn from them, the Presidency, in cooperation with European Union bodies and civil society organizations, will support every further attempt at awareness-raising and informing of EU citizens, particularly among the youth, on the rights and obligations deriving from the status of the EU citizen, thus strengthening the sense of belonging to a common European space for EU citizens.*

## JUSTICE

In the justice sector, the Presidency will actively contribute to the progress of measures and initiatives within the concept of Justice for Growth and is committed to making progress on data protection and on initiatives in the area of criminal law.

### Justice for growth

Modernizing the EU's insolvency rules to facilitate the survival and recovery of viable businesses and present a second chance for entrepreneurs has been identified as a key action to improve the functioning of the internal market. In this concept, particular attention will be paid to concluding work on the revision of the Insolvency Regulation with the desirable aim to reach a final agreement.

Greece expects to make significant progress on the Regulation creating a European Account Preservation Order, with a view to possible adoption of the Regulation. The proposal aims to encourage more cross-border business activity within the EU by reducing the risks associated with such activity.

Further, the Presidency recognizes the importance of the proposal for a Common European Sales Law. It is understood that the objective of this legislation is to promote the harmonization of an essential part of civil law in the European Union aiming towards a more efficient operation of the internal market and free movement of goods. The Presidency, having regard of the difficulties identified at the examination of this instrument, will continue negotiations of the proposal.

### Data Protection

In the field of Data Protection, the Greek Presidency has set as a main priority the systematic continuation of discussions on the legislative package of data protection. Taking under



consideration the works of the European Parliament, the Presidency will seek progress on discussions aimed towards a political approach.

### ***Criminal Law***

In the field of criminal law, the Hellenic Presidency expects to make significant progress on the proposed Directive on the fight against fraud to the Union's financial interests by means of criminal law, with the aim to possibly reach a final agreement. The objective of the proposal is to strengthen the prevention and fight against fraud and other illegal activities affecting the Union's financial interests by defining criminal offences and sanctions.

The Presidency will work intensively on the Proposal of a Directive on the protection of the euro and other currencies against counterfeiting by criminal law, with a view to possible adoption of the Directive. The aim of the proposal is to increase the protection of the euro and other currencies against counterfeiting by requiring Member States to put in place stronger, more harmonized investigative, judicial and research measures to this end.

The Presidency will seek substantial progress on the package of legislative measures to enhance the institutional aspects of protecting the Union's financial interests, which consists of the proposal for a Regulation on the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor's Office, and the proposal for a Regulation on the reform of the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation ("Eurojust").

The Proposal on the establishment of a European Public Prosecutor's Office aims to introduce for the first time an entity which will have the powers and the resources necessary to investigate, prosecute and bring cases of fraud and other illegal activities affecting the financial interests of the Union, whether national or cross-border, to courts. Furthermore, the reform of Eurojust aims at overcoming the deficiencies in the implementation of its current framework and thereby improving its overall functioning and becoming more operational.

### ***Fundamental Rights and Citizenship***

EU accession to the European Convention of Human Rights remains a high priority for the Hellenic Presidency. We will continue discussions on the EU internal rules relating to the implementation of the accession agreement in the EU internal order. We expect from the Commission to put forward a comprehensive proposal in this respect as soon as possible.

We will continue discussions on racism and xenophobia, following the presentation by the Commission by the end of January of its report on the implementation of the framework-decision 2009/913/JHA. The Presidency will organize a conference on combating hate crime by the end of April in Thessaloniki.

We will initiate discussions on the follow-up by the Council of the joint FRA-Presidency conference on violence against women to be held in Brussels on the 5<sup>th</sup> March.

We are prepared to continue discussions on a more systematic FREMP's involvement in EU human rights policy, including the coherence between the internal and the external dimensions of EU policy.

### ***HOME AFFAIRS***

In the area of home affairs, special emphasis will be placed on the issues of migration, both legal and illegal, border surveillance, as well as visa and asylum policies, in line with the Hellenic Presidency's main priorities. Furthermore, attention will be paid to police and customs cooperation among Member States.



### ***Asylum, Migration and Mobility***

The precarious environment in the immediate vicinity of Europe, coupled with the persistence, in third countries, of the root causes of migration flows towards the EU, drive up the pressure exerted to the Union at a time of economic crisis and reform efforts, when all resources should be directed at achieving stability and development. The consequences of this pressure are felt with greater intensity by the Member States at the external borders of the EU, particularly the ones neighbouring the Mediterranean, and those already afflicted by deep recession and high unemployment.

In this context, the Hellenic Presidency will promote the implementation of the Common European Asylum System, with particular emphasis on measures to strengthen solidarity to those member-states whose asylum systems are under particular pressure, with respect to the obligations arising from international treaties and EU law and in cooperation with relevant EU Agencies and international organizations. Respect and protection of the fundamental rights of asylum seekers and persons in need of international protection will be at the top of relevant initiatives.

Since mobility is a term broader than migration, it is necessary to link the external dimension of migration with interrelated policies such as visa policies (facilitation agreements, visa dialogues and national policies of EU member states on long term stay, revision of the Visa Code), strategic partnerships, EU competitiveness and a common migration policy, capable of contributing to the implementation of the Europe 2020 Agenda.

The renewed EU Global Approach to Migration and Mobility constitutes the policy framework for the EU and serves for the dialogue and cooperation with non-EU countries. In line with the pillars of the EU's Global Approach and taking into account the results and suggestions of the relevant implementation report, expected to be submitted by the Commission, the Presidency will maintain the efforts for an efficient cooperation with third countries on all the dimensions and aspects of migration and asylum policy. The Presidency will focus on the evaluation of the renewed Global Approach.

### ***EUROSUR Application and Border Control***

The Presidency will make every effort to enhance the operational capabilities of Member States and further promote the operational cooperation among Member States at the Union's external borders.

Following the adoption and entry into force of the Regulation concerning the European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR), Greece will labour to facilitate all necessary actions for its smooth and harmonized implementation. The Presidency will particularly seek further progress in the implementation phase by all Member States with obligation to establish National Coordination Centers.

Moreover, Greece will constructively cooperate with all Union bodies to seek common understanding and progress on the proposal for a Regulation for the establishment of rules for the surveillance of the external borders during Frontex's Joint Operations.

### ***Visa Policy***

The Presidency will work to advance negotiations on the expected proposal by the Commission on the revision of the Visa Code, as well as similar proposals that might be tabled. At the same time the Presidency will try to promote the ongoing visa dialogues with third countries and to conclude pending and new Visa Facilitation Agreements.



### **Legal Migration and Integration**

In the field of legal migration, the Hellenic Presidency intends to promote the on-going legislative work, with the express purpose of completing it.

To this end, the Presidency will work intensively in order to achieve political agreement on the proposal for Directive concerning the entry and residence of third country nationals in the framework of intra-corporate transfer.

The Presidency also aims at advancing the discussions and seeking an agreement on the proposal for a directive on the entry and residence of third country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, pupil exchange, remunerated and unremunerated training, voluntary service and au pairing.

Finally, as regards integration, the Presidency will promote the discussion on revisiting the Common Basic Principles in the light of new developments and challenges in the post - Stockholm period.

### **Illegal Immigration**

One of the Presidency's priorities will be to continue to promote awareness and international cooperation for combating illegal immigration, under the principles of European solidarity and burden and responsibility sharing.

In this context, the Hellenic Presidency will seek to work towards updating the "*EU Action on Migratory Pressures - A Strategic Response*," placing emphasis on measures tackling illegal immigration, focusing on readmission and return, fighting human trafficking and building institutional capacity for border management, in cooperation with third countries of origin and transit of migratory flows, for the benefit of all member-states. Fair sharing of burdens and cooperation of member states and EU institutions in effecting, notably, a comprehensive returns policy, is considered of utmost importance.

### **Europe of Safety**

Improving the environment of security and free movement throughout the Union by protecting crucial infrastructures from terrorist or other threats will also form a priority of the Hellenic Presidency. The Presidency intends to support actions in the framework of combating terrorism, organized crime, trafficking and smuggling that will arrive at enhanced cooperation and training of the relevant Member States agencies.

Moreover, the Presidency will promote the revision of the EU strategy referring to the fight against radicalization and recruitment of terrorists and will continue the examination of the developments concerning the phenomenon of foreign fighters and its impact on the safety of EU. Additionally, the Presidency will examine the strengthening of border security in relation to the threat posed by terrorism.

### **Law Enforcement Cooperation and Training**

The Presidency intends to support any actions that will enhance common training programs of law enforcement agencies within the framework of combating terrorism or organized crime, with special emphasis on facilitation of illegal immigration, trafficking and drug smuggling. Particular attention will also be paid to the collection and exchange of information between the relevant authorities of the Union's Member States.

The Presidency also intends to further promote the discussion on the proposal for a Regulation concerning the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation and Training (Europol), with the purpose of achieving conclusion of discussions at working party level.



Finally it is the Presidency's intention to initiate and promote discussions with the purpose of adopting a Guidelines text that will form the basis for the operation of Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) within the member-states, that the Commission is promoting as a nodal point for the processing and transmission of all incoming and outgoing requests for law enforcement cooperation. The functioning of Police and Customs Contact Centres (PCCCs), their interaction with SPOCs and their cooperation with third countries will also be dealt by the Presidency.

### ***Customs Cooperation***

The Hellenic Presidency will focus on the EU Policy Cycle priorities 2014-2017 for organized and serious crime by implementing the 7<sup>th</sup> Action Plan of the CCWP. During the Hellenic Presidency, strategic and tactical objectives will be revised according to the EU Policy cycle Multi Annual Strategic Plans (MASPs) and Operational Annual Plans (OAPs).

The Hellenic Presidency will promote cooperation amongst customs administrations of EU Member States, as well as between customs authorities and other law enforcement agencies by coordinating Joint Operations under the auspices of CCWP.



## **Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO)**

*The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO) Council is composed of employment, social protection, consumer protection, health and equal opportunities ministers, who meet around four times a year. Ministers will meet twice during the Hellenic Presidency, in March and June 2014.*

*At a time when employment issues have become so pressing in Europe, the revamping of EU governance structures is essential so as to ensure the effective monitoring and implementation of EU reform commitments. The Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Semester process have set employment policy at the heart of EU activities. The EPSCO Council has a central role in this process, through coordinating, monitoring and providing guidance in the elaboration and implementation of employment policy by the Member States.*

*Recognizing that good health is a prerequisite for economic growth, the Hellenic Presidency will prioritize the progression of a number of important legislative proposals in the areas of public health, pharmaceuticals and medical devices. In addition, the Presidency will work towards promoting successfully implemented initiatives and cooperation between Member States towards more effective health systems and better health.*

## **EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY**

### **European Semester**

The 4th European Semester has to address the economic and social challenges we are facing today. The Hellenic Presidency will focus on the following:

- Deepening the political dialogue on the Social Dimension of the EMU. The adoption of the new “social scoreboard” represents considerable progress. The strengthening of the Social Dimension will contribute to the smooth functioning of the euro area and to the reconciliation of European citizens with the European Project. The Hellenic Presidency will encourage stronger coordination between economic policies and employment and social policies, as well as the reinforcement of the role of social partners.
- The EPSCO of March 2014 will focus on the preparation of the Spring European Council, particularly through the Joint Employment Report and the Social Scoreboard. The General Approach on Employment Guidelines will be also agreed.
- The EPSCO of June 2014, on the basis of the evaluation of the National Reform Programmes, will approve the 2014 Country-specific recommendations on Member state's employment and social policies.

### **Promoting Employment and Particularly Youth Employment**

The Hellenic Presidency will focus on promoting initiatives to enhance employment. In this context, priority will be given to speeding up the implementation of the «Initiative for Youth Employment», as well as monitoring the implementation of the «Youth Guarantee». Progress in this field will be reviewed by the June EPSCO. In order to facilitate work experience- a key asset for the smooth transition of young people from school to working life- we will adopt a Recommendation that would set the Quality Framework for Traineeships.

In order to improve the employment of the workforce, we will encourage geographical mobility. Special attention will be given to reaching agreement on a General Approach on the Regulation re-establishing EURES.





We are determined to adopt and finalise negotiations with the European Parliament on the Directive concerning the posting of workers. We are also committed to reaching agreement for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Cooperation between Public Employment Services.

Special emphasis will be placed on combating undeclared work. To this end, appropriate initiatives will be taken for the timely adoption of the Decision on the undeclared work Platform.

Moreover, the Hellenic Presidency will place emphasis on the promotion of the Program for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) and the PROGRESS Microfinance Facility, aiming at the retention and creation of jobs through the development of SMEs and social entrepreneurship.

### **Social Protection**

Enhancing the social dimension of EMU under the Hellenic Presidency includes the promotion of policies on active inclusion. We will place emphasis on social investment, social innovation, children and young people. Our goal is to enrich the agenda with substantive social issues such as creating adequate and sustainable social protection systems and ensuring the minimum safety nets in order to address emerging social phenomena such as population aging, unemployment, undeclared work and poverty.

### **Social Dialogue**

The current social and labour situation requires, more than ever, in close cooperation with the social partners, the enhancement of social dimension that will strengthen Employment, Social Inclusion and Protection. In this context, strengthening social dialogue and active involvement of the social partners in the planning and implementation of reforms is a necessary condition. The Hellenic Presidency will work towards the adoption of a Proposal for a Decision of the Council with a view to strengthening the "Social Summit".

Making use of the results of the European Social Dialogue, the Hellenic Presidency will ensure the adoption of the Council Decision so that the Framework Agreement of the European Social Partners on working time in inland waterways might be implemented.

A strong social dialogue is a prerequisite for effectively addressing complex challenges such as the restructuring of enterprises. During the next semester, this issue will be discussed on the European agenda, while the Communication of the European Commission on "Social Dialogue and Business Restructuring" is expected. This Communication will help to address the issue in a socially and economically responsible and sustainable way.

### **Gender Equality, equal opportunities and fight against discrimination**

In the fight against discrimination the Hellenic Presidency will continue the examination of the Proposal for a Directive on equal treatment, irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, and the Proposal for a Directive on improving the gender balance of the Boards of companies listed on stock exchanges.

Equality between women and men is a fundamental value of the European Union and a prerequisite for social equality and economic growth. The Hellenic Presidency will concentrate on highlighting the need for women's equal participation in the labour market, on strengthening the protection of fundamental women's rights, placing a special emphasis on gender-based violence.

More specifically, as a follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action, Greece will be focusing on the critical area of "Women and the Economy". Following the preparation of a Report, in



cooperation with the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the European Commission, aiming at the development of new indicators in relation to women's employment, the Presidency will be preparing draft conclusions on "Promoting women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources", in order for them to be adopted by the EPSCO Council in June 2014. The initiative will be framed around the Europe 2020 Strategy and will be building on the work already undertaken by the previous Presidencies. It could also be complemented by the parallel and independent work that EIGE is doing on collecting data on good practice on female entrepreneurship.

As far as gender mainstreaming is concerned, the Presidency will strive to ensure continued cooperation between Member States and the European Commission. In this context, a meeting of the High-Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming will be hosted in Athens in February 2014.

As far as violence against women is concerned, a High Level Political Conference, jointly organized by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the Presidency will take place in Brussels, in March 2014, entitled "Violence against women in the EU: from childhood to adulthood". The Conference will launch the results of the biggest ever violence against women survey in the EU.

In addition, a European Conference entitled "Women and ICT", organized by the Presidency, will take place in Athens, in April 2014. The Conference aims at the advancement of women and girls in the critical field of information and communication technologies, as a prerequisite for coming up against female unemployment.

Finally, the Hellenic Presidency intends to cooperate with the European External Action Service and the European Commission in coordinating the Union's presence and position at the 58<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, scheduled to take place in New York, in March 2014.

## **HEALTH AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS**

### **Health Policy**

The Hellenic Presidency is committed to making substantial progress on the proposals on medical devices and in-vitro diagnostic devices. The aim of the two proposals is to provide a legislative framework for the manufacture and placing on the market of medical devices and in-vitro diagnostic devices, while ensuring a high level of health protection. The establishment of trust between consumers/users, health personnel and economic operators is of paramount importance for widespread use, unimpeded circulation and encouragement of innovation of medical devices. Improvements in medical technology can also boost the EU's global competitiveness and create jobs, while reducing healthcare costs and enhancing the efficiency of healthcare.

The Hellenic Presidency remains committed to significantly progress with the ultimate aim of finalizing the legislative proposal for a Regulation on fees payable for pharmacovigilance activities. This proposal aims at providing the European Medicines Agency with adequate means in relation to the conduct of such activities, as foreseen in the pharmaceutical legislation introduced in 2012.

The Hellenic Presidency will also seek progress on the transparency Directive, which will substitute Directive 89/105/EC. This proposal aims at ensuring transparency on pricing and reimbursement, improving access to innovative medicinal products and facilitating the entry



into the market of generic medicines and encouraging research and development of the EU pharmaceutical sector.

Conscious of the current economic situation and its impact on health and health systems, the Hellenic Presidency will focus on the sustainability of health systems. The Presidency will foster the adoption of Council Conclusions on the European health systems response to financial constraints and the lessons learned during the past years, with the aim of identifying best practices and highlighting the key elements of an ideal package of policy measures to overcome the crisis and develop a recovery model.

Migration and public health will constitute one of the main priorities of the Hellenic Presidency, aiming at raising awareness on the impact of migration on health and health systems and highlighting the positive aspects of the enhanced cooperation of the EU Member States on this common public health challenge.

The Hellenic Presidency intends to place special attention on innovation in the health sector and e-health solutions contributing to the sustainability and efficiency of health systems. Greece will host the e-Health Forum 2014 aiming to drive the Digital Agenda forward and promote policy dialogue and international cooperation towards the deployment of concrete solutions and high quality e-health services that can substantially reshape healthcare systems, empower citizens, foster economic growth and create employment opportunities during these challenging times. In this context, the Hellenic Presidency will also host the second High-Level e-Health Experts Conference on European Priorities.

Finally, in the fight against non communicable diseases, the Presidency will host a High-Level Conference on nutrition and physical activity. Building on the input of the Conference, the Presidency intends to propose Council Conclusions on nutrition and physical activity, aiming at promoting healthy lifestyle behaviours across the Lifecycle.

#### *Foodstuffs*

In the field of foodstuffs, the Presidency will contribute to the new legislative initiatives concerning Novel Foods and Cloning for Food Production.



### Competitiveness Council (COMPET)

*The Competitiveness Council configuration was created in 2002, through the merging of three previous configurations (Internal Market, Industry and Research), as a response to the perceived need for a more coherent and better coordinated approach and management of EU competitiveness matters. Depending on the items on the agenda, the Council may comprise the European Affairs Ministers, Industry Ministers, Research Ministers, or others. It meets about five or six times a year. During the Hellenic Presidency, the Council will meet in February and May 2014.*

*Competitiveness is key in overcoming the economic crisis and ensuing rising unemployment that Europe is being faced with over the last years. Reclaiming the European Single Market's competitiveness is a necessary step towards providing new impetus to bring the European economies back on track. The Hellenic Presidency will be placing special focus on the financing of SMEs, the locomotive of European growth and employment. Promoting research and development and innovation, as well as improving the legal market and consumer framework will also be among the Presidency's priorities.*

### Competition Policy

In the area of competition law, the Presidency will conclude the adoption of the Proposal for the Directive on certain rules governing actions for damages under national law for infringements of the competition law provisions of the Member States and of the European Union, through the trilogue with the European Parliament and the European Commission.

This legislative initiative on Actions for Damages under national law for infringements of the competition law provisions of the Member States and of the EU is of major importance for the proper functioning of the EU Internal Market, since it aims to facilitate private damages actions brought before national courts, thereby ensuring that both businesses and consumers have a fair chance of obtaining compensation for losses caused by anti-competitive behavior, regardless of where they are based in the EU.

### Single Market

The Single Market is one of the EU's main policy areas to tackle the current economic crisis and a key driver for growth and jobs. A properly functioning Single Market is a prerequisite for economic growth and employment. However, twenty years after its creation, the Single Market remains the greatest achievement of the EU, but its potential is not fully tapped. Removing the remaining barriers that hinder the integration of the Single Market to the detriment of businesses, in particular SMEs, and consumers will be a top priority for the Hellenic Presidency. On the basis of the Single Market Act II, presented by the Commission in October 2012, the Presidency will advance and finalize the work with a view to building a highly competitive social market economy by boosting competitiveness and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, while providing protection and well-being to citizens, consumers and employees. By taking stock of the experience gained from the implementation of the Single Market Act I, the Presidency will pursue a well balanced delivery of the Single Market Act II proposals providing tangible benefits to SMEs, citizens, employees, consumers and the real economy.

To ensure the effective functioning of the Single Market, the Presidency will seek the proper implementation of measures already adopted especially as regards the Services Directive. To further develop the Single Market, a new recast of this Directive will be investigated. To improve the governance of the Single Market, the horizontal use of the Internal Market Information System will be promoted. Also the Hellenic Presidency intends to promote close cooperation between COMPET and other relevant Council formations to ensure the overall coherence of policies and measures related to the Single Market.



### **Industrial Policy**

Industrial policy and competitiveness have been at the forefront of European initiatives on structural reform that will boost economic growth and European competitiveness, reinvigorate Europe's productive base and enhance employment.

In this context, enhancing industrial competitiveness as a prerequisite for economic growth and employment will be a key priority for the Presidency, in line with the EU flagship initiative on industrial policy. Building upon the findings of the European Competitiveness Report and relevant work promoted by the Lithuanian Presidency, the February Competitiveness Council will provide policy directions in order to support economic recovery and make Europe a place of production.

The Presidency will be closely following on the European Council Conclusions, monitoring their implementation with a strong focus on both horizontal issues –such as creation of a business-friendly environment, improvement of access to finance, bridging innovation and market– as well as on the sectoral dimension of industry. In this context, the informal Ministerial Competitiveness Council, which will be held in Athens on 12-13 May 2014, will also be devoted to Industrial Policy, with a view to maintaining the momentum of the ongoing dialogue in Europe.

### **Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises**

Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) are at the centre of the European economic policy agenda, as their contribution to growth, employment and social cohesion is indisputable. Helping them realize their full potential is a major challenge, especially as 2014 will mark the starting point of the new Multiannual Financial Framework and of targeted programmes, like the COSME Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs, and the HORIZON 2020 Programme that will allocate funds to innovative SMEs. Ensuring the effective implementation of these programmes will be a top priority of the Hellenic Presidency.

The Presidency will also contribute to the discussion that has already been opened on a renewed SME policy following the five-year anniversary from the adoption of the Small Business Act (SBA), focusing on access to finance – including through alternative sources – reduction of administrative burden and fostering innovative entrepreneurship.

### **Consumer Protection**

In line with the Trio Presidency priorities, the Hellenic Presidency remains dedicated to promoting a high level of consumer protection while enhancing consumer confidence in the single market and reinforcing the internal market. To this end, the Presidency will seek progress with a view to reach an agreement on the Consumer Product Safety and Market Surveillance Regulations package. The package aims to ensure the safety of consumer products, simplify market surveillance procedures and enhance cooperation of market surveillance authorities.

The Presidency also expects to take forward discussions regarding the proposal for a Directive on package travel and assisted travel arrangements, seeking to update the existing regulatory framework.

### **Smart Regulation**

The creation of the right regulatory framework and the reduction of administrative burden is particularly important in times of economic challenges. The overall regulatory burden, in particular for SMEs, should be reduced at both European and national levels. In this context the Presidency will seek to ensure that the implementation of Smart Regulation initiatives



creates a favorable environment for the enterprises, in particular SMEs, by enhancing competitiveness and reducing compliance costs. Based on the experience gained when implementing the initial burden reduction program of 25% arising from European legislation, a new round of burden reduction will be pursued for all stakeholders both at European and national levels.

### **Research and Innovation**

Research and development, as well as innovation, constitute important aspects of EU competitiveness and indispensable levers for sustainable growth. The Hellenic Presidency will work to ensure that the international dimension of science, technology and innovation remains an important element in the evolution of the European Research Area, which, according to the European Council Conclusions, must be completed by 2014 and create a genuinely common market for knowledge, research and innovation. In particular, efforts should be made to improve the mobility and career prospects of researchers, the mobility of graduate students and the attractiveness of Europe for foreign researchers. The Presidency considers that closer interaction between member states and the European Commission, on the one part, and the various scientific stakeholders, on the other part, is a necessary tool towards the enhancement of the ERA. Under the current difficult budgetary restrictions, all expenses on Research, Development and Innovation should be sufficient and effective, in order to achieve a viable and long term development of the European economy.

Investment in research, technology and innovation is a key driver of growth and innovative ideas that can be turned into new marketable products and services and help create growth and quality jobs. The Innovation Union is the EU's strategy to turn Europe into an innovation-friendly environment, by enabling innovative ideas to be turned into products and services that create growth and jobs. Under contemporary acute world competition, promoting of Innovation is an utmost challenge for the European Union, as being the key concept to getting sustainable development in Europe and facing great challenges as the climatic change, the energy security, sufficiency of quality foodstuffs, health, demographic ageing. Therefore, the new EU policies on the Innovation Union should include all relevant support measures and actions towards resolving long term issues and also facing various challenges resulting from economic growth.

The Presidency also welcomes the effort undertaken by the European Commission, in collaboration with the OECD, to develop a Europe 2020 Innovation Indicator which is expected to have important political consequences. However, we consider that, aiming to make this indicator an efficient tool, further studies should be focused to 'capture' innovative potential for countries being for a long period in a deep economic recession, which should rely on technology and innovation policies for recovery.

Regarding the ways of increasing the innovation dynamic of the Medium Sized Enterprises, the 'COSME' and the 'HORIZON' Programmes need to lift all impediments to a direct access to financing and investment. The Hellenic Presidency will encourage innovative dynamism at a European scale.

The Presidency will seek to ensure that 'Horizon 2020' Programme for Research and Innovation is implemented from early 2014. 'Horizon 2020' can play a decisive role for jobs and growth and help create the European economy of the future. Horizon is the financial instrument implementing the Innovation Union, the Europe 2020 flagship initiative aimed at securing Europe's global competitiveness and driving to create new growth and jobs in the area. It is also designed to bring more good ideas to the market. The programme also seeks to secure major investment in key technologies, bridging the gap between research and the



market and promoting real commercial partnerships between member-states and the private sectors.

### **Intellectual Property**

Intellectual Property is closely linked to a competitive economy and a flourishing culture. The Hellenic Presidency will make its best endeavors to achieve maximum progress in this field.

More specifically, the Presidency will focus on the completion of the initiatives pertaining to copyright under the Digital Agenda for Europe, scheduled to take place in 2014. It will seek to finalize the procedures required for the adoption of the Collective Rights Management Directive before the closure of Parliament for elections in May 2014.

Apart from completing pending initiatives, the Presidency will also seek to look into the future of copyright. Greece intends to initiate discussions on a new set of actions that could potentially be taken to bring copyright in line with online and market developments, while taking into consideration the need to protect authors and right-holders, as well as the need to ensure public access to knowledge and culture. The Presidency will be organizing a Conference in Athens on the subject, thus giving the opportunity to experts and stakeholders to assess the progress already achieved in the area and offer insight into possible future actions and developments in the field.

Improving the patent system also remains a priority for the Hellenic Presidency. However, given that the examination of details for the implementation of the unitary patent is under way, and depending on the level of progress achieved by the Committees in that area, the Presidency may inform the Competitiveness Council of May 2014 on the state of play.

Greece recognizes the importance of trademarks as a means to strengthen the competitiveness of businesses within the Single Market, thus contributing to economic growth and the achievement of the Europe 2020 Strategy's goals. In this context, the Presidency intends to finalize discussions on the Directive approximating national trade mark laws, as well as forward the examination of the Community Trade Mark Regulation in order to achieve the broadest possible consensus in both legislative texts and proceed for voting. The Regulation aims to significantly modify the structure of the Office for Harmonization of the Internal Market and establish enhanced cooperation between the Office and the national trade mark offices. The end goal is to develop a harmonized and effective EU legislative framework on trademarks that will create a safe and friendly environment for entrepreneurship.

### **Customs Union**

In the field of Customs Union, the Hellenic Presidency will initiate discussions on the new legislative proposal for the amendment of Council Regulation 515/97 on mutual assistance between the administrative authorities of the Member States and cooperation between Member States and the Commission. The amendment of the Regulation introduces the obligation for public and private service providers to report to the Commission information regarding containers' traffic. A relevant data base will be created and the Regulation provides for issues of legal base, data protection, data storage and access to data. Furthermore, with the proposed amendment, Regulation 515/97 will be aligned with Lisbon Treaty by the introduction of delegated acts.

The Hellenic Presidency will also focus on a legislative proposal concerning customs penalties. This proposal will address the problem that penalties may differ from one Member State to another, even though they are imposed for identical violations of customs legislation. This creates a situation where individuals engaged in illegal activities may choose



a Member State with the most liberal penalties (*penalty shopping*). Although the application of sanctions/penalties falls within the competence of Member States, this legislation will aim at making customs sanctions/penalties as uniform as possible. The purpose of this initiative will be to achieve effective application of customs legislation through uniform definition and qualification of violations and following the introduction of uniform sanctions/penalties to ensure that all businesses in the EU enjoy the same conditions.

### **Company Law**

In the area of company law, the Hellenic Presidency will seek to finalize negotiations on the proposal for a Directive on the disclosure of non-financial information and diversity information by large European companies and groups. The aim of the Directive is to increase the transparency and comparability of information on environmental, social, employment, human rights and anticorruption issues, thus enhancing the overall competitiveness and effectiveness of the Single Market. Country by country reporting is also included in this Directive and this will further contribute to the fight against tax evasion.

The Presidency will also make every possible effort to formulate a consensus text on the statute for a European Foundation. The activity of charitable foundations operating in EU is of crucial importance for sectors such as education, provision of social services, environmental protection. In many cases their actions go far beyond national borders. Establishing an EU-level legal form of legal entity will go a long way towards facilitating their work.

### **Public procurement**

The Hellenic Presidency will focus on the importance of public administration modernization in the field of public procurement, seeking in particular the completion of procedures on the proposed Directive on electronic invoicing in public procurement. Moreover, concerning the crucial public procurement package (in particular the “classical” Directive), the Hellenic Presidency may arrange for meetings on relevant implementation.

### **Technical Harmonization**

In the field of technical harmonization, the Presidency will continue work on the Review of the Internal Market Legislation, notably the Directives on Pressure Equipment, Radio equipment and the Regulation simplifying the transfer of motor vehicles registered in another member-state. The Presidency also aims at achieving an agreement within the Council on the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning type-approval requirements for the deployment of the eCall in-vehicle system and amending Directive 2007/46/EC.

Finally, the Presidency will seek to achieve considerable progress on all other possible proposals that may be presented by the Commission (revision of the Directive on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) 89/686/EEC, the Directive 2000/9/EC relating to cableway installations and the Gas Appliances Directive 2009/142/EC).

### **Space**

The Presidency will work towards promoting “Space surveillance and tracking support [SST]”, so that the possibility of the trilogue with the European Parliament be finished.

The COPERNICUS project is a first priority issue for the European Union, since it contains ESA [European Space Agency] purchases as well as a project of satellites’ launch for 2014-“Sentinels”. The Hellenic Presidency will probably prepare a ‘State of Play’ at the Competitiveness Council in May 2014 and also include the legislative proposal “Earth Observation Satellite Data for Commercial Purposes”.





The Hellenic Presidency is willing to put forward the issue of the “Appropriate relations between the European Union and the European Space Agency”. The item “International Space Exploration Forum, Washington DC, January 2014-Follow-up to the European Council of Defense” is going to be proposed by the Hellenic Presidency as a point of information for the delegations at the Competitiveness Council on February 2014.

#### *Tourism*

In the field of tourism, the Presidency will focus on the initiative of the European Commission to set up an EU Strategy on the “Challenges and Opportunities for Maritime and Coastal Tourism in the EU” with the aim to promote sustainable economic growth and enhance the overall competitiveness of the maritime and coastal tourism sector. In this context, and in view of the upcoming Commission Communication, the Presidency will be organizing a High-Level Conference on the subject.

This action will be aligned with the monitoring and the implementation of the European Commission’s Communication “Europe, the world’s No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe”, as well as the promotion of the development of a sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism.

Finally, the Presidency will give due attention to developments on the initiative of the Commission on the European Tourism Quality Label.



## Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council (TTE)

*The Transport, Telecommunications and Energy (TTE) Council was also created in 2002, so as to ensure the effective coordination of policy in these three vital and closely interconnected policy areas. The Council's composition varies according to the items on the agenda (Ministers for Transport, Telecommunications or Energy).*

*The TTE Council's agenda has a very important role to play in the implementation of the Europe2020 Strategy, through the achievement of a fully interconnected Europe across borders and networks. Chief among the Council's priorities during the Hellenic Presidency will be the completion of the Internal Energy Market and the Digital Single Market and the various initiatives launched towards that goal.*

*The Presidency's premise is that the Internal Market is not an end in itself but a crucial instrument and process to deliver the aspirations of Europe's citizens: economic growth, jobs, secure coverage of their basic needs at an affordable and competitive price, and sustainable use of limited resources.*

*Given the importance of the TTE Council's agenda in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy, Greece intends to hold five meetings of the Council, under its various compositions: two of these meetings are scheduled to take place in March (Energy and Transport) and three in June 2014. (Energy, Telecoms and Transport). Additionally, the Presidency will hold three Informal Meetings of the Council in Athens, in May, two in its Transport (one of these will be only for maritime) and one in its Energy Composition (together with the Environment Council).*

### TRANSPORT

As far as the horizontal issues in the area of transport are concerned, the Presidency will labour to conclude negotiations with the European Parliament on the Proposal for a Directive on the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure (in first reading agreement).

#### Aviation

In the area of air transport, the Hellenic Presidency will give priority to the proposal about the introduction of noise related operating restrictions at Union airports, which appears to be mature enough for reaching an agreement with the European Parliament. Equal priority will also be given to the proposal concerning the rights of passengers, where an agreement within the Council will be sought.

Depending on the availability of time, the Presidency will elaborate on other aviation files which are pending, such as the remaining acts of the "airport package" (i.e. slots and groundhandling) and (possibly) the least controversial part of the new proposal on the Single European Sky. Moreover, the Presidency will work on topics related to the Union's aviation relations with third countries and international organizations. These actions will include, inter alia, the signing of the aviation agreement with Ukraine and (possibly) with Brazil and the preparation of the EU-ASIAN Aviation Summit, to take place in Singapore, in February 2014.

#### Land Transport

As regards land transport, the Presidency will aim to reach an agreement within the Council on the proposal amending the Directive laying down the maximum authorised dimensions and weight in national and international traffic of certain road vehicles circulating within the Community. The Presidency also intends to achieve an agreement within the Council on the proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the deployment of the interoperable EU-wide eCall.



Although the time available to achieve our goals for the Council of March 2014 is short, the Hellenic Presidency will focus its efforts to conclude agreements for the new ERA Regulation and the Council Regulation Shift2Rail.

After the Council of March 2014, Greece will "open" the debate for the political section of the 4th railway package. Our goal is to present a Progress Report (either for the proposal for Public Service Obligations or the proposal for governance) in Council of June 2014.

### **Maritime Transport**

As a traditional maritime nation, Greece attributes particular significance to shipping and ensuring the impeccable operation of maritime transport. The Presidency intends to promote all initiatives aiming at the facilitation of maritime traffic within the EU internal market for the enhancement of the competitiveness of European shipping. In this context, the Hellenic Presidency will seek the adoption of initiatives aiming at the review of the implementation of the European Maritime Transport Strategy until 2018 and the emergence of relevant initiatives that could be undertaken, emphasizing the enhancement of the competitiveness of the EU fleet and maritime cluster, the cooperation among the Member States as well as the implementation of economies of scale for the development of new modern intelligent systems for maritime transport (blue belt, e-maritime, coast guard functions).

The Hellenic Presidency, perceiving the need for the creation of a more favourable investment environment in ports, will seek the achievement of progress in the Council with regard to the proposal for a Regulation establishing a framework on market access to port services and financial transparency of ports. Given the fact that the aforementioned legislative proposal aims at a more effective and sustainable operation of the Trans-European Transport Networks via the creation of an appropriate institutional framework for the improvement of port performance, the Presidency will attribute particular significance to the procedures within the Council, aiming at the elaboration of a legislative text which will contribute to the enhancement of the growth, the smooth operation of the single market as well as the creation of a stable environment in terms of a level playing field in ports in collaboration with the Member States.

The enhancement of the implementation mechanisms and control of requirements for marine equipment, the simplification of the relevant regulatory environment, as well as the assurance that the requirements of the International Maritime Organization will be implemented and realized in a harmonized manner by the Member States, constitute a priority of the Presidency, since they are factors of major importance for the safety of navigation, thus affecting positively the protection of life at sea as well as the preservation of the marine environment. Consequently, the Presidency will pursue an agreement with the European Parliament with regard to the Marine Equipment Directive.

### **TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

In the telecommunications sector, the Presidency will labour to promote all measures conducive to the establishment of the Single Digital Market framework and the implementation of the "EU roadmap for stability and development."

Top among the Hellenic Presidency's priorities will be the promotion of the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market (e-idas). The Hellenic Presidency intends to help create an integrated cross-border and cross-section EU legal framework ensuring safe, reliable and user-friendly electronic transactions among businesses, citizens and public services, that will be covering electronic identification,



electronic identity verification and electronic signatures, thus increasing public and private online services, e-business and e-commerce in the EU.

Moreover, the Presidency will seek to promote the Directive on measures to reduce the cost of deploying high-speed electronic communications networks. Following the reduction of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), this proposal is an important initiative for promoting investment in next generation networks, so as to accelerate the deployment of high speed broadband networks and significantly decrease its cost.

Equally high on the Presidency's priorities will be the EU Cybersecurity Strategy and the proposal for a Directive concerning measures to ensure a high common level of Network and Information Security (NIS) across the Union. The Directive aims at instituting a number of measures to be observed by both the public and the private sector involved in critical infrastructure services (energy, transport and information society), so as to improve internet, public and private networks and information systems security, increase Member States readiness and mutual cooperation, particularly in the areas of risk management and incidence reporting to the competent national authorities.

In parallel, the Hellenic Presidency will strive to promote the proposal for a Regulation creating a single telecoms market, according to the recent decision of the European Council taking into consideration its nature of "legislative package", the application of which will change the map of Telecommunications throughout the EU, modifying three EU Directives and two EU Regulations.

Other important files such as the Directive on the accessibility of public sector bodies' websites will also be part of the Presidency's work programme. The aforementioned Directive will set a framework of principles and techniques on the accessibility of public sector bodies' websites. The aim of the Directive is the convergence of legislative, regulatory and administrative provisions of Member States and their harmonization at EU level, so that public websites' content becomes accessible to every EU citizen. Particular emphasis will also be placed on improving the accessibility of people with disabilities and the elderly.

Part of the working programme of the Hellenic Presidency is the mid-term review of the Digital Agenda for Europe. The Presidency will be focusing on optimum ways and means of resetting the Digital Agenda targets, so as to further promote the digital economy through mutually reinforcing and complementary measures. The review will also take stock of the rapidly evolving Information and Communication Technology (ICT) landscape and the emergence of new services, like the provision of digital public services (for example, e-health) so as to better respond to this rapidly changing environment.

The Presidency will also examine the objectives of the 'Europe 2020' strategy and will deal with the definition of European positions at the Plenipotentiary Conference and at the World Telecommunication Development Conference of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

On satellite issues, the Presidency will place particular emphasis upon the international relations and the common minimum standards on the rules for access to the Public Regulated Service (PRS) provided by the GNSS under the Galileo Programme.

## **ENERGY**

In the energy sector, the priorities of the Hellenic Presidency are largely determined by two landmark dates for the development of the EU energy strategy, namely the 2014 deadline set for completing the Internal Energy Market and the 2015 deadline by which no Member State should remain isolated from Europe's gas and electricity networks. The Hellenic



Presidency intends to take a stocktaking of progress on both goals at the June Energy Council.

Convinced that the level of public participation and satisfaction is one of the key drivers for the successful completion of the Internal Market, the Presidency will endeavor to highlight actions needed to extend the benefits of the integrated market throughout the EU, bridging the gaps between Member States and making the internal market relevant for remote, insular and peripheral regions and by stepping up the role and rights of consumers, including the most vulnerable, to ensure that they can participate and gain from the services of the Internal Market.

Following the successful adoption of the first list of infrastructure projects of common interest (PCI) that will contribute to the 2015 deadline for the interconnected market, their implementation will need to be effectively monitored. Meeting the deadlines will need a constant political push. The Presidency intends to take a stocktaking of progress achieved at the June Energy Council.

The Hellenic Presidency will seek to move forward the EU's energy and climate policies post 2020. The timely establishment of a 2030 framework is vital in order to provide investors with certainty regarding the objectives and policies which will be in effect, to mobilize funding and ensure that the corresponding research and innovation is undertaken to support the new goals. The March Energy Council meeting is scheduled to adopt Conclusions on the basis of the Commission's Communication on "A 2030 Framework for Climate and Energy Policies".

Moreover, in view of the 2015 International Climate Change Agreement, delineating a clear position will validate the EU's ability to engage actively with partners and assume a prominent and constructive role in the process. The Presidency's approach will be pragmatic in determining the type, nature and level of the 2030 targets, thus enabling the EU to meet its long-term climate goals, while taking into account the on-going economic crisis, the varying capacities of the Member States and the concerns of households regarding the affordability of energy, as well as business competitiveness.

The Hellenic Presidency also intends to build on the work already achieved during the Lithuanian Presidency and start early reflection discussions on shifting the debate from targets to instruments (energy efficiency, stronger ETS) of like effect. The Presidency will labour to get important input during the March Energy Council on the way to the March European Council.

Progress towards a more sustainable energy system and maintaining secure supplies at the lowest possible cost goes hand in hand with a liberalized and integrated energy market capable of mobilizing and allocating investment efficiently. In line with the February 2011 and May 2013 European Council Conclusions, Greece places a high priority on the implementation of the Action Plan for the completion of the Internal Market by 2014. Depending on its submission date, the Presidency intends to discuss the Commission's Progress Report on the implementation process, in one of the Energy Council meetings during its Presidency, and work with the Commission on identifying the issues which need to be tackled urgently in order to complete the internal energy market.

Moreover, the Presidency intends to place particular priority on promoting actions and exchanging best practice to enable consumers to fully benefit and exercise their rights and choices and on ensuring that vulnerable consumers are adequately protected. In this respect the Presidency will prioritize the importance of energy efficiency improvements as a cost-effective form of assistance in addressing consumer vulnerability and energy poverty.



The availability of affordable energy for households and competitive prices for businesses is also a key to the success of the Internal Market and this issue constitutes a priority for the Hellenic Presidency. Accordingly, the March Energy Council will debate on the Commission's Analysis on the composition and drivers of energy prices and costs, which will also be discussed during the February European Council on industrial competitiveness and policy. Greece will especially focus on the impact on households, SMEs and energy intensive industries, in the broader context of the EU's global competitiveness in order to adopt Council Conclusions in the June Energy Council.

Taking into account the Commission's statistics, that Member States with diversified portfolios of suppliers and supply routes with well-developed liquid markets have access to more competitively border priced energy, the Hellenic Presidency intends to include, during the May Informal Energy Council, a discussion, with a view to maintaining momentum for further diversification and the development of corresponding infrastructure to foster cross-border trading and improve competition in EU markets. Accordingly the Presidency will seek to highlight the outstanding work required to meet the 2015 deadline to end the isolation of Member States and regions, including islands, from EU networks, in order to bridge existing gaps and enable citizens throughout the EU to access the economic benefits accruing from an integrated internal market.

In this respect, and further to energy efficiency, areas to examine will include: the contribution of indigenous resources for renewables as well as oil and gas resources to reduce the EU's energy prices and import dependence including the need to ensure their exploration and exploitation securely in an environmentally safe manner; maximizing the potential of the EU's external energy policy via the development of more coordinated action for securing supplies from third countries; a more systematic recourse to on-shore and off-shore indigenous sources of energy with a view to their safe, sustainable and cost-effective exploitation on the basis of the Commission's assessment; Prospects for developing the Southern Corridor with more supplies from the Caspian as well as from the East Mediterranean which could become a potential plank of energy security for the EU; EU actions in support of investments in line with the May 2013 European Council conclusions; innovative funding tools/instruments.

Consistent with Greece's steady commitment to strengthening the EU's external energy dimension, the Presidency will continue the work undertaken in this respect by the Lithuanian Presidency. In particular, in the context of strengthening the internal market and ensuring a level-playing field for EU interests in third countries, the Presidency will focus on the Energy Community. Attention will be directed on supporting the Commission's work regarding gradual implementation of the energy acquis and enforcement of the rules adopted in order to ensure that the institution's integrity is consolidated, and support developments concerning the Projects of Energy Community Interest in the context of promoting pan-European energy security.

Particular attention will be paid to the extension and review of the Energy Community Treaty which is due to expire in 2016, in continuation of Greece's historic role in the gestation of the Energy Community Treaty through the so-called "Athens Process".

Regarding the Mediterranean region, Greece has steadfastly supported its increased integration with the EU's energy market. Following the 2012 Ministerial Conference on Energy Cooperation between the EU and countries of the Southeastern Mediterranean region on safe hydrocarbon exploration and the recent Union for the Mediterranean's Ministerial meeting on Energy (Brussels, 11/12) on the Mediterranean Solar Plan, the Presidency will look forward to explore ways and issues suitable of enhancing cooperation at the highest possible level.



As usual, an overview item on the developments in external EU energy relations will also be part of the June Energy Council, with possible adoption of council conclusions mainly oriented to regional energy cooperation, as well as to EU relations with international organizations including IRENA and major supplying, consuming and transit countries.

Regarding legislative work, the Presidency, together with the EU institutions, will explore the possibility to reach a political agreement in the Council regarding the Commission's proposal for the Fuel Quality Directive and Renewable Energy Sources Directive (ILUC), by promoting the use and market penetration of the least polluting biofuels and their sustainable production as well as protecting investments till 2020.

The Presidency will also start working on the Commission awaited proposal on the sustainability criteria for solid and gaseous biomass, if it will be submitted during the Hellenic Presidency, having in mind its delicate character.



### **Agriculture and Fisheries Council (AGRIFISH)**

*The Agriculture and Fisheries Council, or “Agrifish” for short, is one of the oldest Council configurations, along with the Economic and Financial Affairs Council and the General Affairs Council. It brings together the Ministers of EU Member States responsible for these policy areas. In most Member States a single Minister is responsible for both sectors, while in others responsibility is divided between two Ministers: one for agriculture and another for fisheries.*

*Ministers meet once a month for one or two days. The Agrifish Council is in charge of some very important EU policies, like the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). It also deals with such important issues as food safety and animal health, plant protection, forestry, and the setting of common rules for the markets of agricultural products.*

*A modern, sustainable and competitive agriculture, food and fisheries sector is important not only for jobs and growth, but also for sustainable development, environmental preservation and global food security. The EU agriculture sector is also a major exporter and an important contributor to rural vitality in Europe.*

*European agriculture is an important part of the EU economy. It provides secure and quality food to 500 million citizens and occupies 12 million employees in Europe. The EU is world famous for the richness of its agri-food products, which gives it the first place in the world food exports. A modern, sustainable and competitive agriculture, food and fisheries sector is very important for jobs and growth and for the rural vitality in Europe. It is also important for the environmental preservation and the global food security.*

*Diversity, Quality, Sustainability and Extroversion, as drivers for EU prosperity, growth and jobs are the motto of the Hellenic Presidency.*

### **Agriculture**

In the field of agriculture, the Hellenic Presidency will be guided by the key goal of sustainable rural development, promoting the quality, the diversity and the innovation in European agriculture, as well as the smooth transition to the new environment created by the reformed common agricultural policy and the appropriate implementation of the rural development tools.

The Presidency will highlight the contribution of European agricultural diversity to growth as a significant comparative advantage in relation to the EU competitors. To that end, “Transforming the European agricultural diversity into strength” will be the issue of discussion in the Informal Ministerial Council meeting in Athens on 4-5 May.

The Presidency will be focusing on the new Common Agricultural Policy, through the completion and the simplification of the legislative framework. This simplification will help improve the competitiveness of European agriculture, especially given the current global agricultural markets conditions.

The new Common Market Organization regulatory framework aims to improve the market operation of individual sectors and to simplify the procedures for market management, thus creating a more flexible structure that provides added value to European agricultural products, as well as tools for crisis management and the protection of European farmers. The Hellenic Presidency will focus on the completion of the Common Market Organization regulatory framework and the improvement of the tools and measures promoting the agricultural products in the markets, strengthening the competitive position of the farmers in the food supply chain, promoting the local farming and the quality of agrifood products and highlighting the contribution of the diversity as a competitive advantage and value added for the European agriculture.





Particular attention will be paid to the continuous improvement, of the European framework for the promotion of the quality, nutritional value and hygiene of agricultural products, as well as food security. Focus will also be concentrated on environmentally friendly agricultural production methods.

The Presidency intends to shift a considerable amount of attention and effort on further highlighting the importance of community certificated quality schemes with the aim of improving the position of European agricultural products in international markets.

The review of the agriculture regime for the outermost regions and the achieving of the objectives of important tools of the European agriculture policies, the exploitation of the opportunities offered from introducing the innovation and the better use genetic resources in agriculture will be part of the Presidency works.

In parallel, the Presidency will forward Council work on the adaptation of agricultural legislation to the Lisbon Treaty. In this context, promoting the amendment and adaptation of the Regulation concerning spirit drinks to the Lisbon Treaty will be a priority of the Hellenic Presidency.

#### ***Animal Health, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Issues***

In the field of veterinary and phytosanitary sectors, the Presidency will give special attention to the examination and making progress on the legislative proposals on plant and animal health, the propagating material as well as the official controls in the food and feed chain.

The new Animal Health Law stems from the Animal Health Strategy 2007-2013 and will set the framework for activities relating to animal health and welfare for the years to come. The Presidency considers this proposal considerably important, as it will ensure a high level of protection of public health and animal health through a greater focus on precautionary measures, disease surveillance, bio-security and research on animal disease incidence and impact of outbreaks. Coupled with the Official Controls of the Food and Feed Chain proposal as well as with the the improved phytosanitary legislative framework, this legislation will greatly enhance confidence in the EU food system and help boost European farmers' products' demand.

#### ***Fisheries***

In the fisheries sector, the Hellenic Presidency will seek to ensure a more sustainable management of EU fishing and fisheries. As well as being at the core of the reformed agricultural policy, the sustainable management of our natural resources is central to Common Fisheries Policy reform, providing the potential for economic growth, particularly in coastal areas and across the whole chain of the fisheries economy.

In this vein, and following the adoption of the Regulations on the Common Fisheries Policy Reform and the Common Market Organization for Fisheries and Aquaculture Products during the Irish Presidency, the Hellenic Presidency will continue the work of the Lithuanian Presidency as regards the conclusion of negotiations on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and will begin the reform package's effective implementation.

With a view to ensuring high and sustainable water resources' exploitation, consumer and environmental protection, professionals' support and research and innovation promotion and enhancement, the Presidency will foster the adoption of a number of multiannual management and recovery plans. Once the issue of the legal basis has been ruled upon by the Court of the European Union, the Hellenic Presidency will effort to promote all the aforementioned measures of rational stock management, with the purpose of achieving



maximum sustainable yield levels and helping to alleviate the social and economic problems of the fisheries sector.

The Presidency will also further support the aquaculture sector and work to enhance the processing and marketing of fishery products.

Work on the alignment of the various existing Regulations to the Lisbon Treaty, as well as on the implementation of the decisions of the various Regional Fisheries Management Organizations in EU law will continue unabated during the Hellenic Presidency.

In the context of external fisheries policy, bilateral and multilateral negotiations will remain high on the agenda. Protocols accompanying a number of Fisheries Partnership Agreements with third countries are expected to be agreed upon during the Hellenic Presidency.

Finally, the Hellenic Presidency will handle the annual General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) Summit to take place in May 2014 in Rome. The Presidency is also planning to host an extraordinary Session of the GFCM in Greece, for the purpose of modifying the Commission's legislative framework.

### **Forestry**

In the field of forestry, the Hellenic Presidency will focus on sustainable forest management and its important contribution to sustainable development and a green economy. The Presidency will seek timely progress on any pending issue.

Regarding the Legally Binding Agreement (LBA) on Forests in Europe, and provided that negotiations will be successfully concluded during the resumed 4<sup>th</sup> INC Forests (Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee), scheduled for 7-8 November 2013 in Geneva, the Presidency will undertake the preparation of an Agriculture Council decision authorizing the Commission to sign the LBA on behalf of the EU in the Ministerial Conference to be held during the Hellenic Presidency for that purpose.

Finally, the Presidency will pursue the coordination of EU participation and preparations in view of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Session of the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO), scheduled for June 2014, in Rome. The Presidency will similarly undertake all necessary steps to ensure the timely and effective preparation of future EU contributions to the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) Review Process, in anticipation of the 11<sup>th</sup> Session of the UNFF (UN Forum on Forests), scheduled to take place in May 2015, in New York.



### Environment Council (ENVI)

*The Environment Council is composed of environment Ministers who meet about four times a year. There will be two meetings of the Environment Council during the Hellenic Presidency in March and June 2014, as well as an Informal Environment Ministerial Council in Athens in May 2014.*

*Environment, within the wider context of sustainable development, will be key in the Hellenic Presidency's agenda. The challenges posed by the current economic and financial situation cannot be addressed effectively in the long term without a continuing emphasis on green growth and resource efficiency. Thus, the objective of the Hellenic Presidency will remain to ensure a high level of environmental protection that can also stimulate a harmonious, balanced and sustainable economic growth.*

*The recent adoption of the 7<sup>th</sup> Environment Action Programme will provide an overarching framework to guide the formulation of the programme and priorities of the Presidency. On the international level, the Rio+20 follow-up will give the opportunity to further specify EU positions on several issues pursued at the UN General Assembly level.*

### Effective Environmental Protection

The Hellenic Presidency will work to promote environmental integration in sectoral policies; it will pursue policies and legislation that aim at preserving the quality of the environment based, inter alia, on the precautionary and the polluter pays principles, human health, and the prudent and rational utilization of natural resources.

In this context, the Presidency will work to close all the remaining files under discussion in the Council. It will aim at concluding the negotiations on the amendment of the waste shipment regulation, on the CITES regulation recast and on invasive alien species. If, due to time constraints, a first reading agreement with the Parliament is not possible on the last files, as well as on the proposal on plastic bags, a political agreement is envisaged instead, by June 2014.

Moreover, the Presidency will seek to significantly progress the dossier of reviewing the thematic strategy on air quality, including the review of the NEC (National Emissions Ceilings) Directive, the Decision on the Ratification of the Revised Gothenburg Protocol and the new proposal on Medium Sized Combustion Plants, that were adopted by the Commission at the end of 2013.

Finally, the Presidency will seek to achieve considerable progress on all other possible proposals that may be presented by the Commission.

### Climate Change

Regarding climate change, the Hellenic Presidency will try to finalize the file on the EU ETS Aviation in view of the implementation, by 2020, of an international agreement applying a single global market-based measure to international aviation emissions.

The Hellenic Presidency intends to raise the profile of the Climate-Energy 2030 Package, possibly by bringing the issue to discussion during the March European Council so as to address some outstanding political elements of the Package, pending the timely presentation of the Climate-Energy 2030 Package by the Commission.

Moreover, the Presidency intends to take forward the ongoing discussions on the proposal for a Regulation on maritime emissions (Monitoring, Reporting and Verification – MRV), which constitutes a dossier of high importance for Greece. Given the particular complexity of the issue and the international interest in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from ships, the Presidency intends to advance as much as possible the specific legislative proposal,



in order to address clear and practically applicable rules for shipping in the light of relevant significant international developments within the framework of the International Maritime Organization.

Finally, the Presidency will further pursue to advance the proposals concerning the ratification of the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which has to be endorsed in view of the culmination of international negotiations for the new global and legally binding instrument in 2015.

### ***International Environmental Cooperation***

At the international level, the Presidency will pursue the formulation of the EU and Member States' position and negotiating priorities in view of the Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCDB) to take place in October 2014 in Korea. Council Conclusions will be agreed to that effect by the June 2014 Environment Council.

Moreover, the Presidency will coordinate the EU and Member States' position for the participation to the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Intergovernmental Committee for the Nagoya Protocol, to take place in February 2014, also in Korea. Furthermore, it will pursue preparations for the EU participation in the Convention on Migratory Species Meeting of Parties, scheduled for October 2014.

As far as chemical issues are concerned, the Presidency will also contribute to the formulation of the EU and Member States' common positions, in view of the Kumamoto Conference for the Signature of the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

As regards climate change, the Presidency will pursue the consolidation of the EU and Member States' negotiation lines and priorities in view of the 20<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, to take place in November-December 2014. The Presidency will encourage discussions and approval of a common position by the Council which, coupled with an active participation in the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) foreseen for June 2014, will aim at reaffirming the EU leadership in international climate negotiations to be concluded in 2015 with the adoption of a new global legally binding agreement for the post-2020 period.

Regarding global aspects of sustainable development, the Presidency will seek that substantive input and guidance is produced from the Council for the various New York processes related to the "Rio+20" follow-up.

Special emphasis will be given to fine-tuning EU & Member States positions regarding the ongoing stock-taking debate in the UN General Assembly towards the elaboration of a single overarching post-2015 development framework. Emphasis will also be given to the process of elaborating and agreeing on sustainable development goals (SDGs) by September 2014; input from the Ministers will be possibly sought at the March 2014 Environment Council.

The Presidency will also seek to formulate a concrete EU & Member States input, through discussions in the Council, towards the work of the Expert Committee on a Sustainable Development Financing Strategy that is expected to conclude its work by the end of 2014.

Finally, the Presidency will coordinate and promote preparations for an effective EU participation in the second High Level Political Forum (HLPF) at Ministerial/ECOSOC level that will take place in July 2014.

More importantly, the Presidency will be responsible for the coordination and preparation of the EU participation in the first biannual United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) to be convened in Nairobi in June 2014, where special emphasis will be given on UNEP's



contribution to the process of developing the post-2015 agenda and on ways to embed the environmental dimension in the SDGs. EU preparations during the Hellenic Presidency will entail, inter alia, participation in the preparatory Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR) to take place in Nairobi in March 2014, as well as consolidation of EU & Member States positions on all draft decisions put forward for UNEA.

Additionally, the Presidency will coordinate preparations for the EU participation in the 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Parties to the Aarhus Convention scheduled for the end of June/beginning of July 2014 in Maastricht, as well as the parallel 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of Parties to the PRTR Protocol.

Finally, the Presidency will host the Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate Change of the Union of the Mediterranean (UfM), that will take place in Athens on the 13th May 2014. Furthermore it will cooperate with the relevant DGs of the European Commission and the Secretariat of the UfM for the preparation of the Ministerial Declaration to be adopted by the UfM Ministers.



### Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council (EYCS)

*This final Council configuration, the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport (EYCS) Council, brings together the education, youth, culture, communication and sport Ministers of the EU Member States around three or four times a year. Ministers will meet twice during the Hellenic Presidency, in February and May 2014.*

*Given the current economic environment and the consequent curtailment and tight control of public spending, the Hellenic Presidency—in line with the 18-month Programme of the Trio Presidencies— will focus considerable attention on the contribution of education, youth, culture, audiovisual and sport to economic growth, jobs and social cohesion.*

#### Education

Education and training have a crucial role to play in meeting with the many socio-economic challenges that Europe and its citizens are facing today and in the years ahead. Indeed, one of the Europe2020 Strategy's headline targets concerns education. Education and training systems should contribute to sustainable economic prosperity and employability, especially among the young; this can be achieved by staying ahead of the constantly evolving globalised labour market of rapid technological change and innovation, so as to ensure that all EU citizens are equipped with the skills and competences required by it. The further development of EU Member States' education and training systems should be aimed at ensuring the personal, social and professional fulfillment of all citizens. The promotion of democratic values, respect for fundamental rights, social cohesion, active citizenship, environmental awareness and intercultural dialogue should be among its main aims.

It is therefore evident that high quality, efficient and equitable education and training systems are crucial for the enhancement of the employability of Europe's workforce. Ensuring the acquisition of key competencies by everyone and developing the excellence and attractiveness of all levels of education and training will allow Europe to succeed in overcoming its current economic and social challenges, whilst retaining its strong global role in the field of education and training.

As the Hellenic Presidency coincides with the start of the new Multiannual Financial Framework, including the new Erasmus+ Programme and the new Structural and Investment Funds, Greece will work so that the importance of investing an appropriate share of these funds in education and training is adequately stressed by Education Ministers, and so that they discuss and voice the issue of education at an early stage of the Annual Growth Survey.

This is all the more relevant in light of the recent publication of the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) and PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) Surveys by the OECD and the European Commission in September and October 2013, respectively.

Bearing all these in mind, the Hellenic Presidency of the EU intends to debate the Surveys' results in the February 2014 EYCS Council, with the goal of adopting Council Conclusions on *"Efficient and Innovative Education and Training to Invest in Skills."* The proposed Conclusions will address a number of issues resulting from policy developments at the end of 2013, such as a) the Communication on Opening Up Education that will move forward the discussion on digital skills, learning methods and the use of Open Educational Resources, and b) the Response by the Ministers of Education on the Alliance for Apprenticeships, the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Employment Initiative.

In the context of the Copenhagen Process and Bruges Review, the Hellenic Presidency will also hold a Conference on Vocational Education and Training, focusing on skills mismatches between demand and supply of the education and training system.



In what regards quality and efficiency, the use of evidence-based policies and practices constitutes an important basis for more efficient and equitable education and training systems. The Hellenic Presidency will work to promote Quality Assurance at all levels of education and training, through the adoption of relevant Council Conclusions at the June 2014 Education and Youth Council Meeting. In this context, the Presidency will also focus on mobility of qualifications, one of the most important factors that encourage student mobility and guarantee the success of study exchange and cooperation programmes among institutions.

The Presidency will also discuss Higher Education issues and foster the new multi-dimensional ranking system of Universities “U-Multirank” and will hold a Conference on the subject. It will also work to promote the new “Erasmus+” Programme and hold a Conference to put forward all issues related to its implementation.

The Barcelona European Council meeting of 2002 identified language competence as an essential component of a competitive knowledge-based economy. The 2011 Council Conclusions on language competencies mention that a good command of foreign languages is essential to mobility and entry in the labour market and the modern world. As a follow-up to the European Survey of Language Competences, the Hellenic Presidency will discuss an approach to the new European benchmark in the field of language learning at the June 2014 EYCS Council, to complement those already agreed under the “ET 2020” Strategic Framework.

Teachers’ Education will be another area of priority for the Hellenic Presidency. To fulfill the above-mentioned educational goals, there is a need to ensure high quality teaching, through the provision of adequate initial education and continuous professional development for teachers and trainers, and by constituting teaching an attractive career choice. The Presidency will build on the European Commission’s presentation of April 2013, following the Conference held by the Irish Presidency on “The Professional Identity of Teacher Educators,” with the aim of adopting relevant Council Conclusions at the June 2014 Education and Youth Council.

In the field of equity and social cohesion, the Presidency will also focus on pre-school education and early school leaving. A Conference will be held to highlight all relevant issues.

### *Youth*

Being the most vulnerable group, young people still face challenges in terms of employment, education and training, poverty, health and participation. It is therefore crucial for Europe to attain the objectives regarding smart and sustainable growth, social integration and social cohesion. To this end, the “EU Youth Strategy” and “Europe 2020” Strategy jointly develop and promote specific initiatives and different actions targeting young people, namely employment and entrepreneurship, creativity and culture, social inclusion and solidarity.

Within this context, the current Trio Presidency (Ireland, Lithuania and Greece) has agreed on “Social Inclusion” as the overall thematic priority for European Cooperation in the Youth Field. As regards its own Presidency, Greece intends to take political measures to combat the phenomenon of social exclusion of young people mainly in the field of culture and entrepreneurship.

It is evident that the fields of culture and creativity have a dual -economic and cultural- nature, as they often contribute to the stimulation of local communities by encouraging the reorganization of those in decline, the emergence of new economic activities, and the creation of new and sustainable jobs. Also, participation in non-formal and informal learning activities (“Youth Work”) provides added value to all young people, particularly the most



vulnerable. Youth work provides young people with skills and competencies that help them develop their personality, boost their confidence and facilitate their transition from education to employment and the labour market.

The Hellenic Presidency's threefold aim is a) to promote the design of measures that foster social inclusion of young people, by enhancing their entrepreneurial spirit, promoting youth entrepreneurship and primarily social entrepreneurship, and creating "green jobs" and new job opportunities for young people in the field of culture, b) to increase the accessibility of young people –particularly those living in remote areas– to new technologies and to empower youth talent in the field of culture and c) to promote the contribution of youth work, including through the exchange of good practices, in enhancing the creativity and entrepreneurship of young people.

The Hellenic Presidency will promote the topic of "culture and entrepreneurship" through the adoption of Council Conclusions on "Promoting youth entrepreneurship with special focus on social entrepreneurship in the field of culture to foster the social inclusion of all young people", at the May 2014 Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council Meeting.

In addition to the Council Conclusions, the Hellenic Presidency aims at the adoption of a Council Resolution on "Overview of the Structured Dialogue with Young People on Social Inclusion", at the above-mentioned Council Meeting. This Resolution will reflect a) the Conclusions endorsed in the first phase of the Structured Dialogue Review which was completed in Brussels during the European Youth Week (2013), b) the Joint Recommendations of the second phase of the Review which was organized in Brussels (November 2013) and c) the Joint Recommendations of the E.U. Youth Conference which will be held in mid-Mars 2014, in Thessaloniki.

The above-mentioned Youth Conference which takes place in parallel with the General Directors' Meeting is the highlight of the Structured Dialogue process. Moreover, this Dialogue with Young People is coordinated, at the European level, by the European Steering Committee on Structured Dialogue which will meet twice during Hellenic Presidency.

In the context of this process, the Hellenic Presidency, as customary, will host the Informal Forum on Structured Dialogue. This meeting is a platform for the exchange of views between the European Commission, the Ministers for Youth, the National Youth Councils of the Trio Presidency, as well as the incoming Presidency of the next Trio, the European Youth Forum and the General Secretariat of the Council.

In order to contribute to achieving the goals of the "Europe 2020" Strategy, the Hellenic Presidency will encourage a substantial dialogue in view of the evaluation of the Council Session's results (November 2013) and intends to start discussions on the "E.U. first Work Plan in the field of Youth".

### *Culture*

Europe's cultural heritage and diversity are among its greatest strengths. Indeed, the importance of culture has become even more pronounced over the past few years, as a consequence of the economic crisis. In the general setting of adverse financial conditions and rising social inequalities, culture can contribute significantly to economic recovery and social cohesion, functioning as both a driving force for development and a crucial factor of identity shaping.

In the framework of the EU 2020 Strategy, and with reference to the role of culture as a pillar of development, the Hellenic Presidency aspires to make a meaningful contribution to the debate about the role that cultural heritage and creative economy are set to play in the 21st century. Conferences will be held on both issues and Council conclusions will be sought.





More specifically, the Presidency will focus on cultural heritage as a decisive factor of sustainable development, with special regard to its economic and social aspects. Topics include innovative ways of funding, economic and social partnerships, audience development and social cohesion. Emphasis will be laid on the need for shaping and promoting a common European approach to cultural heritage.

Furthermore, the Presidency will pursue objectives related with the increasing significance of the Cultural and Creative Sector. Topics include information about the existing tools and expertise that facilitate access to finance, as well as the preconditions required for creativity and innovation to flourish within a culture of entrepreneurship, and efficient strategies leading to social and economic prosperity.

The inclusion of culture in EU's external relations will be discussed, with emphasis on intercultural dialogue, on cross-fertilization and on reinforcement of collaboration between EU and China, as well as on the promotion of culture in international decision making.

With respect to the Work Plan for Culture 2011-2014, the Presidency will encourage the dialogue on its evaluation, as well as on the preparation of thematic priorities for the upcoming new Work Plan.

The Presidency will also be leading negotiations with the European Parliament in order to reach an agreement on the recast of the Council Directive 93/7/EEC on the return of cultural objects unlawfully removed from the territory of a member-state.

Furthermore, the Presidency will seek an early agreement with the European Parliament in order to adopt the Decision establishing a Union action for the European Capitals of Culture for the years 2020 to 2033, and will advance the implementation of the action through the appointment of the selection and monitoring panel. This well-established, respected and popular initiative constitutes a primary example of culture's positive impact on long-term growth and urban and regional development, in both economic and social terms.

Finally, the Presidency will promote the implementation of the Protocol on Cultural Cooperation between the EU and the Republic of Korea, through the adoption of relevant Council decisions.

#### *Audiovisual Affairs*

The digital environment is rapidly changing, leading to the creation of new services and devices at an incredible speed. These rapid technological developments have led to the transformation of the audiovisual media landscape. The Hellenic Presidency will be pursuing the political dialogue within the Council initiated by the Lithuanian Presidency so as to thoroughly examine the issues arising from this transformation.

On the basis of the first report on the application of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, the Commission has already concluded European Public Consultations on a) promoting the independence of regulatory authorities competent for audiovisual services and b) preparing for a fully converged audiovisual world: growth, creation and values. The Commission has also completed European Public Consultation on promoting media freedom and pluralism. The Presidency intends to work on the results of the above consultations, expected to be published by the European Commission, and develop a constructive dialogue among the Member States.

Furthermore, the Presidency will also be focusing on the protection of minors in the digital era which is marked by the increasing convergence of traditional audiovisual services and the internet. On April, a Conference will be organized in Athens on that subject, with the



participation of representatives of public administrations of the EU Member States, regulatory authorities, academics and market players.

Moreover, the Hellenic Presidency will seek the adoption of a new Council Decision on the signing on behalf of the Union, of the “European Convention on the legal protection of services based on, or consisting of, conditional access” of the Council of Europe, following relevant judgment issued by the Court of the European Union

As regards cinema, the focus will be on the digitization of cinemas and film heritage and on new platforms for distributing audiovisual material and film. The Presidency will work on the Council Recommendation on “European Film in the Digital Era”, provided that it is presented by the Commission at the beginning of 2014.

### *Sport*

Since the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, the sports sector has gained new momentum in the EU. The Hellenic Presidency aims to foster progress on the thematic proposals currently on the sports agenda.

Following the Commission’s evaluation report of the first Work Plan in the field of Sport, the Hellenic Presidency will encourage the dialogue on the evaluation of the result of the first Work Plan.

The main Presidency’s objectives will be the adoption of a Council Resolution on the second Work Plan for Sport (2014-2017), and the adoption of Council Conclusions on Gender Equality in Sport.

The actions of the Work Plan should focus on the three following themes:

- Sport and society (including gender equality and HEPA)
- Economic dimension of sport (including collection of data on sport’s role for employability and health care savings, financing sport structures and legacy of major sport events), and
- Integrity of sport (including anti-doping, match-fixing and protection of minors).

The Hellenic Presidency of the Council of E.U. selected the Economic, Social and Environmental Sustainability of Major Sport Events as the topic of the Structured Dialogue in Sport.

In the framework of implementation of the above-mentioned priorities, the Hellenic Presidency will organize a Seminar on Gender-based violence in sport: minors’ protection and an Informal Meeting of EU Sport Directors on Exercise and Health.

