Programme of activities of the Polish presidency of the Council

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The Council took note of the presentation by the Polish, Danish and Cypriot delegations – the "trio" of presidencies for the period from July 2011 to December 2012 – of **a draft 18-month programme for the Council**.

Implementation of the work programme will require close cooperation with the President of the European Council, as European Council meetings are prepared by the General Affairs Council, and with the High Representative, who chairs the Foreign Affairs Council.

Over these 18 months, the issues described below will be of strategic importance for the achievement of the EU's long-term objectives for 2020 and for strengthening its role in the international arena.

1) Economic governance: over the last years, Europe has gone through a severe economic crisis, entailing negative growth rates, rising unemployment and increasing pressure on public finances and on social cohesion:

- With a view to overcoming the consequences of the crisis, efforts will be enhanced in order to **recreate sustainable public finances**, remedy structural weaknesses and improve competitiveness within the Union.
- Implementing **exit strategies**, including fiscal consolidation, will remain high on the agenda.
- The need for reinforced **economic policy coordination and enhancing economic governance** will be further addressed and implemented.

2) Europe 2020 Strategy: to ensure that the EU will emerge stronger from the crisis by strengthening its international competitiveness, the Europe 2020 Strategy will need to be implemented in an efficient way:

- The Union will promote a **new source of growth** such as intellectual capital and a green, more resource efficient, and knowledge-based economy that is able to respond to long-term economic and social challenges and challenges which are related to climate change, energy sufficiency and the protection of ecosystems and biodiversity.
- The **Euro Plus Pact** will achieve a new quality of economic policy coordination, with the objective of improving competitiveness, employment, fiscal sustainability and financial stability.
- Continued efforts will be made with regard to all aspects of the **Single Market** and the small and medium sized enterprises which are the backbone of the European economy.
- Efforts will also be made towards developing a **dynamic digital single market**.
- Future economic success will not be possible without increasing investments in **research and innovation, education and training**. To this end the Union will have to pursue its efforts with regard to the implementation of the "knowledge triangle"- concept and the creation of a true European Research Area, which allows for a reduction of policy fragmentation and the free movement of researchers.

3) Negotiations on the new Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF): these negotiations need to be **concluded before the end of 2012** in order to allow for a timely adoption and implementation of EU policies, programmes and financial instruments. The MFF will have to reflect in a balanced way the needs of existing policies, respond to the new challenges and underpin the priorities arising from the Europe 2020 Strategy. The new MFF will also address the new policies introduced by the Lisbon Treaty.

4) Europe for its citizens: the development of the EU also depends on its acceptance by citizens. In the coming years a new focus on policies which are beneficial to citizens will therefore be vital. These policies, which cover a wide range, will need to take account of the necessary adaptations to a changing international environment as well as of societal challenges such as the demographic change and social cohesion.

5) Addressing societal challenges: the implementation of the **social component** of the Europe 2020 Strategy and addressing societal challenges will be of great importance in order to achieve inclusive growth.

- **Investment in human capital**, which aims to enhance the access to quality education, to upgrade professional skills and to strengthen lifelong learning, in order to increase employability and inclusive labour market participation. In this context the elaboration and implementation of actions related to youth employment and mobility deserve special attention.
- **The European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012** will draw attention to the immense demographic challenges our societies are confronted with.
- The Union will also need to be more visible and effective when it comes to policies and living conditions which affect citizens' every day lives. In the field of **health**, the EU Health Strategy, the new Public Health Programme and the innovation partnership on healthy ageing will respond to the demographic change, health determinants, innovations in healthcare aimed at sustaining healthcare systems and alleviating global health threats.
- Promoting **food quality and safety** as well as safety in relation to consumer products are important areas where the action at the level of the Union represents a direct and genuine added value for European citizens.
- The Union will continue to give particular attention to **culture**. Its action in this area will also help promote active citizenship, promote creative and cultural industries and at the same time enhance cultural governance.

6) Sustainable growth: this requires an integrated approach with respect to policies on climate change, transport, agriculture, environment and energy, aiming at resource efficiency.

- In line with the Europe 2020 Strategy, one of the fundamental objectives over the coming years will be the promotion of **green growth through a sustainable and efficient use of resources**.
- This approach and related governance issues will also be promoted and defended at international level in the most important fora such as the **Rio + 20 Summit**.
- The EU will renew its **Environmental Action Programme**. In this context special emphasis will be given to biodiversity issues at European and international level, aiming at a significant improvement of the status of biodiversity with new targets to be implemented by 2020 and 2050.
- The three Presidencies will continue to work on the **follow-up to the agreement on climate change** reached in the UNFCCC Conference in Cancun and will prepare the forthcoming Conference in Durban. The Union will deploy all its means and endeavours to contribute to achieving an international climate change agreement for the period post 2012.
- Efforts to combat climate change are closely linked to **energy and transport policies**. On the basis of a number of policy initiatives, including in particular actions under the EU flagship initiative on resource efficiency, the Union will further discuss ideas and actions with a view to reducing emissions by 80-95% by 2050 compared to 1990 levels.
- Energy **infrastructure**, security and efficiency, renewable energy, the internal energy market and the external action in the field of energy will continue to be cornerstones of EU level activities. In the light of the nuclear accident in Japan, the review of the safety of nuclear plants will be of major importance.

7) Justice and home affairs: in the area of Justice and Home Affairs, the implementation of the Stockholm Programme will remain a key priority for the Union.

- The priorities of the Stockholm Programme will be reflected in all action taken. The overall challenge will be to **ensure respect for fundamental freedoms and integrity while guaranteeing security**.
- The Union will ensure that the situation in the **Southern Mediterranean** will effectively be dealt with.
- The achievement of a **consolidated European area of justice** with mechanisms that facilitate access to justice, allowing citizens to benefit from their rights throughout the EU, data protection and the fight against all aspects of organised crime are constant concerns and will remain in the focus of the Union's policies.
- The Union will also pursue the implementation of the European Pact on Migration and Asylum with a view to developing a forward looking and comprehensive European Immigration Policy and will work towards the **completion of the Common European Asylum System by the end of 2012**.
- Work on improving the European **response capacities to face disasters and crises**, both in the EU and in third countries, will be taken forward, taking into account the necessary balance between prevention, preparedness and response.

8) Enlargement and neighbourhood policy:

- the negotiations underway will be pursued and the European perspective of the **Western Balkan countries** will be further advanced.
- Within the framework of the neighbourhood policy, the EU will further **develop and consolidate its relations with the countries to the East and to the South of the Union**, w ith the aim of contributing to the stability and prosperity of these regions (revised neighbourhood policy).

9) Role of the EU in the world: to be able to exert influence that reflects its weight, the EU must have a coherent and consistent policy in its external relations.

- To this end the Union will make full use of t**he new structures, tools and possibilities** established and provided for by the Lisbon Treaty such as the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European External Action Service.
- As the world's largest trading area, the Union needs to play an even more central role in the **regulation of economic, financial and trade issues** in the G20, the WTO and other relevant multilateral fora.
- As the world's largest donor of development aid, the EU is well placed to promote European values and interests, to contribute to inclusive and sustainable growth, and to continue to implement the international financing for development agenda and further enhance the effectiveness of EU aid. The EU will continue to **promote the Millennium Development Goals** with the ultimate goal of eradicating poverty by 2015. The EU will continue to pursue the reform and strengthening of its Development and Humanitarian assistance policies.
- It will be vital for the Union to develop further its **strategic partnerships with key players in the world.** It will also be important to further develop regional frameworks and strategies in order to ensure the EU's continued role in solving regional and global challenges, while promoting growth, prosperity and security. The transatlantic relationship will continue to be a key element of EU's external policies in order to be able to face new challenges such as the emergence of new global players.
- In line with the UN Charter, the Union will continue to play an undeniably important role in the area of **security, crisis management and combating global terrorism**.