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The Slovak Republic EU Presidency Priorities¹

The Slovak Republic holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union from 1 July 2016 to 1 January 2017 until when it hands it over to Malta. Slovakia will hold the EU Presidency for the first time since it became a Member of the EU in 1 May 2004.

The Slovak Republic will preside over the Council of the European Union at a time when the European Union is facing a number of challenges – migration, terrorism, hotbeds of tension in its neighborhood, repercussions of the Eurozone crisis and a referendum resulted with the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union.

The Slovak Presidency's focus will be on the follow-up of the Strategic Agenda that was adopted by the European Council of June 2014. The Presidency's policy priorities are as follows; an economically strong Europe, a modern single market, a sustainable migration and asylum policies and a globally engaged Europe.

As Presidency, Slovakia will prioritize investments which contribute to economic growth and the creation of new jobs under the title of an economically strong Europe. Making full use of and multiplying investment instruments, pursuing structural reforms and promoting a responsible approach to public finances are at the heart of an economically strong Europe. Besides, further the deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union that will help increase competitiveness, negotiations about the Union's budget for 2017 and the building of the Capital Markets Union will also feature high on the economic agenda.

Furthermore, the Slovak Presidency hopes to contribute to the creation of a resilient and competitive Energy Union with a forward-looking climate policy.

As regards the Digital Market, Slovakia will prioritize the elimination of barriers to digital economy, the facilitation of the use of electronic services and access to the market, the availability of electronic content, as well as a high level of consumer protection.

In the area of migration, the Slovak Presidency will aim, first and foremost, at the implementation of the EU external border protection policy and at the integrity of the Schengen Area. The Presidency is planning to prioritize positive agenda such as the Smart Borders package and the joint European asylum system which seeks to contribute to the fight against irregular migration and speed up passenger processing times through the use of modern technologies. In order to cope with irregular migration, cooperation with third countries, especially with migrants' countries of transit and origin, and in this context effective cooperation in the field of returns and readmissions, for example cooperation between the EU and Turkey, is seen crucial.

¹ Kaynak: <http://www.eu2016.sk/en/programme-and-priorities/programme-of-the-presidency-trio>



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Hotbeds of tension in the EU's neighborhood are also among the challenges facing the Union. As the EU's enlargement policy represents the most effective instrument of positive change in this regard, Slovakia will seek to maintain the momentum and credibility of this process.

On the other hand, the implementation and development of EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy, promotion of an effective European neighbourhood policy, strengthening transatlantic ties, deepening cooperation with international organisations, focusing on bilateral free trade agreements and attaching importance to the progress in relations with the African, Caribbean and Pacific group of states.

The EU Presidency new trio for the Netherlands, Slovakia and Malta which took over the trio from Italy, Latvia and Luxembourg will hold the successive presidencies for the next 18 month.

The current trio's work programme is in line with the European Commission's priorities which are based on the 5 pillars of EU'S Strategic Agenda. These priorities are as follows; "A Union of Jobs, Growth and Competitiveness", "A Union that Empowers and Protects All Its Citizens", "Towards an Energy Union with a Forward Looking Climate Policy", "A Union of freedom, security and Justice" and "The Union as a Strong Global Actor"