

**PROGRAMME OF THE ITALIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE
EUROPEAN UNION**

(1 JULY TO 31 DECEMBER 2014)

Table of Contents

A. *General Affairs*pg.4

 Institutional Issues

 Europe 2020 Strategy

 Enlargement

 Regional and Territorial Policy

 Integrated Maritime Policy

 Macro-regional Strategies

 Atomic Questions

B. **Foreign Affairs **pg.10****

 Common Foreign and Security Policy

 Common Security and Defence Policy

 Fight Against Terrorism

 European Neighborhood Policy

 Common Trade Policy

 Development

 Humanitarian Aid

C. Economic and Financial Affairspg.17

A new policy agenda

Reviewing Europe 2020 Strategy

Banking Union

Strengthening the Regulation of Financial Markets

Taxation

EU Budget

D. Justice and Home Affairs pg.20

Justice

Justice for Growth

Data Protection

Civil Law

Criminal Law

Judicial Training

Detention

e-Justice

Home Affairs

Migration

Border Control

Asylum

Fight Against Crime

Drugs

Fight Against Terrorism

Cyber Security

Visa policy

Civil Protection

Customs Cooperation

E. Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs pg.28

Employment, social developments and the review of the Europe 2020 Strategy

Greater Employment Opportunities – Focus on Youth

Rights of Workers

Social Investment

Social Dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union

Equal Opportunities for Men and Women

Non-discrimination

Health

F. Competitiveness pg.33

Single Market

Intellectual Property

Industrial Policy

Company Law

Technical Harmonisation

Better Regulation

Consumer Rights

Customs Union

Tourism

Research and Innovation

Space

G. Transport, Telecommunications and Energy pg.41

Transport

Single Digital Market

Energy

H. Agriculture and Fisheries pg.46

Agriculture

Fisheries

Veterinary, Food safety and Phytosanitary

Forests

I. Environment pg.49

A Resource-Efficient Europe

Climate Policy beyond 2020

Greening the European Semester

International Environment Agenda

J. Education, Youth, Culture and Sport pg.53

Education and Training

Youth

Culture and Audiovisual

Sport

A. General Affairs

Institutional issues

The Italian Presidency will take up its work in the middle of the transition from one legislative cycle to another. The new European Parliament will convene for the first time on 1 July 2014. During the Italian Presidency the new Commission will be appointed and the new President of the European Council will take office. The Presidency will act with a view to facilitating the transition, creating a favourable political environment and promoting a constructive debate between all stakeholders in the renewal process.

Following the European elections, an in-depth reflection will have to take place in terms of the results and the way forward. The gap which European citizens perceive between themselves and the EU institutions needs to be filled, since any sound and sustainable governance architecture must ultimately be rooted in citizens' identification with their institutions.

The Presidency will therefore aim to address the fundamental challenge of strengthening the efficiency and democratic legitimacy of the EU decision-making process, particularly in the light of the considerable advances in integration in the domain of economic governance which have been accomplished in the last few years under the pressure of the economic and financial crisis.

In this respect, the Italian Presidency will encourage collective thinking on how to improve European governance. In particular, a debate will be fostered on the functioning of the EU institutions, with reference among other things to the EU's administrative procedure, on inter-institutional cooperation and on how better to exploit the margin for manoeuvre still offered by the Lisbon Treaty provisions. The Italian Presidency will also draw and possibly build upon the debate on subsidiarity which has been deftly carried forward by the Greek Presidency on the basis of national contributions. Dovetailing with the progress made in the past few months, including in the field of the Banking Union, the Italian Presidency will also encourage the continuation of work along the lines of the four pillars' roadmap outlined in the Report of the four Presidents and endorsed by the Heads of State and Government in December 2012. Some of the report's most interesting recommendations – those concerning the democratic legitimacy of euro area economic

governance, fiscal capacity and the underpinning of structural reforms through incentives, to name just a few - remain unfulfilled, but ought to be accorded the utmost attention.

In our opinion, the political juncture mandates an open and thorough discussion. The Italian Presidency will therefore encourage Member States and the European institutions to express their views on the way ahead. The ultimate goal in the years to come should be to shape a new shared vision of the EU: strongly oriented towards growth, competitiveness and innovation, and more closely integrated in key areas such as European Monetary Union (EMU) and the single market; more democratic, accountable and closer to its citizens, rule-based but also discerning, rigorous and yet cohesive; strongly grounded in the principles of conferral, subsidiarity and proportionality and therefore less intrusive in domains which can be more effectively dealt with at the level of Member States or at regional and local level.

Human rights and fundamental freedoms will also be at the fore and centre of the Italian Presidency, since they represent the cornerstone of the European construction and the defining element of our shared identity. The Italian Presidency will therefore encourage the process of the EU's accession to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights. It will also promote the continuation of work on the Commission proposal to establish a mechanism for monitoring respect for fundamental rights within the EU, pursuant to Article 7 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU).

The Italian Presidency will also be constantly mindful of the proper functioning of the EU bodies and institutions, knowing that this is a key component of the EU's ability to deliver on the objectives set out in the treaties and on European citizens' expectations.

The Italian Presidency is determined to continue the ongoing debate on the functioning of the Council in terms of both reinforcing its interinstitutional relations and improving its internal proceedings, including the possible restructuring of its configurations. Along the same lines, the Italian Presidency is determined to continue the debate on how to enhance the role of the General Affairs Council (GAC) in dealing with cross-cutting issues and coordinating different Council configurations, as well as in terms of an essential element in the preparation of European Council proceedings.

The implementation of reforms enabling the EU's judicial system (including the General Court) to respond effectively and efficiently to the demand for justice from citizens, civil society, institutions and Member States will also receive the Presidency's highest attention.

The Italian Presidency will aim to facilitate the adoption of reforms identified within the European External Action Service's (EEAS) review process, aimed at improving the institutional basis upon which the Service relies to carry out its mission of enhancing the consistency and visibility of the EU's profile in the world.

Europe 2020 Strategy

The Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth is key to the EU's economic recovery and the further development of its competitiveness. Four years after the strategy was launched, the European Union is carrying out a review starting with a wide public consultation launched by the European Commission.

The Italian Presidency recognises that, overall, the Europe 2020 Strategy remains valid. The mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy represents a platform for delivering a better Europe. In the coming months several strategic issues will be discussed, defining the shape of Europe in the medium to long term (i.e. EMU, energy and climate policy 2030, industrial compact, TTIP, own resources): all these elements are pieces of the same puzzle which will be combined in a coherent design. The crisis is having a very strong impact on employment and poverty, widening the gap between the Member States. In this vein, the Presidency intends to promote an open debate in order to make the Europe 2020 Strategy more effective and relevant.

Reflecting the overarching nature of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Italian Presidency will ensure that its mid-term review will be addressed in all relevant Council formations, each focusing on aspects within its sphere of responsibility.

Discussions in the Council and the ongoing public consultation will pave the way towards the pursuit of the review of the Europe 2020 Strategy in 2015.

In addition, the Presidency will support strategies to achieve the Europe 2020 targets, notably by promoting investment in human capital, R&D and innovation, and creating conditions favourable to securing long-term financing for the real economy in key areas such as Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and infrastructures, with the increased involvement of the European Investment Bank (EIB) in cooperation with the national investment promotion banks. The potential for improved competition for growth and possible interaction with the advancements in the TTIP negotiations will also be taken into account.

Enlargement

The enlargement policy is a strategic priority and a fundamental tool for promoting peace, democracy and security in Europe, as well as for supporting the stability, prosperity and sustainable growth of our continent.

Candidate and potential candidate countries should be encouraged to pursue their efforts to bring about the internal reforms which are needed for the adaptation of the *acquis*. The EU, in turn, should demonstrate credibility and a sound commitment to the enlargement process, in order to motivate the candidate and potential candidate countries to take the necessary steps towards progress in the accession process.

The Presidency will work on further advancing the accession negotiations with Montenegro and Serbia with a view to addressing new chapters. The Presidency will pay special attention to reinvigorating the ongoing negotiation process with Turkey.

The Presidency also aims to encourage the continuation of the integration path of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as well as the fulfilment by Bosnia-Herzegovina of the conditions laid down for submitting a credible application for EU membership.

The Italian Presidency will aim to further foster Albania's EU accession process, building on the positive achievements to date.

Furthermore, as regards Kosovo, the Presidency intends to encourage the conclusion and the signature of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and to continue supporting the dialogue of visa liberalisation.

Regional and Territorial Policy

The Presidency will promote a structured political debate in the EU Council with the aim of maintaining a focus on ensuring the increased effectiveness and improved result-oriented initiatives of the cohesion policy.

Building on the achievements of the cohesion policy across Europe and the added value it brings to the Europe 2020 Strategy, inter alia by ensuring ownership of common European objectives at all levels of governance, the Presidency will work on the contribution that an effective cohesion policy can deliver to the review of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Within this framework, the effects of strengthening the link between structural policies and economic governance will also be debated, as well as the follow-up to the Council conclusions on the Sixth Cohesion Report within the framework of a specific session of the GAC dedicated to cohesion policy.

The Italian Presidency, following on from the achievements of former Presidencies, will work to ensure a more systematic political debate on cohesion policy in its three integrated dimensions (economic, social and territorial).

In addition to an assessment of the 2007-2013 results and the launch of the new 2014-2020 programmes, the Presidency will support the follow-up to the work carried out by previous Council Presidencies, taking into account the Commission's Sixth Report on Cohesion and the requests expressed by the European Council and the 2014-2020 Regulations in terms of a strategic and political debate on cohesion policy.

The Presidency will continue the political debate on the EU Urban Agenda and will also ensure continued work on intergovernmental cooperation based on the Territorial Agenda 2020, as well as on the Leipzig Charter. The Presidency will usher in the Trio Presidency programme on territorial Cohesion and Urban Policy, aiming to provide by the end of 2015 a review of the state of the implementation of the Union's territorial cohesion objective and better linking territorial cohesion and urban policy. In this context the Presidency will also highlight those issues which have a stronger Mediterranean focus, such as blue growth.

The implementation of the EU's macroregional strategies will provide an opportunity to discuss how this instrument can be used in support of territorial cohesion.

Integrated Maritime Policy

The Presidency will therefore continue to pursue the Union's Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP), in order to develop and implement integrated, coordinated, coherent, transparent and sustainable decision-making in relation to the oceans, seas and coastal, insular and outermost regions and in the maritime sectors.

Following the June Council conclusions on IMP, the Presidency will maintain a focus on the Marine and Maritime Agenda for Growth and Jobs, so as to ensure an integrated approach to maritime affairs that contributes to facilitating the sustainable use of the oceans, seas and coasts, while at the same time supporting growth and jobs.

In the discussions on the new policy framework on climate and energy, the Presidency will focus on the energy potential in European seas. As regards employment, it will support actions leading to the sustainable growth of coastal and maritime tourism, Europe's largest maritime activity, which is essential to the wealth and well-being of coastal and insular regions and Europe's economy. With regard to transport, the Presidency will work on enhancing the role of European ports as logistics terminals.

Bearing in mind that the Maritime Agenda for Growth and Jobs should be targeted at the specific opportunities and challenges of Europe's Sea Basins, the Presidency will support the development and implementation of integrated sea basin and macro-regional strategies to drive sustainable growth in coastal regions, such as the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR).

Macro-regional Strategies

The Italian Presidency of the Council of the EU is strongly committed to ensuring the effectiveness of the EU Macro-regional Strategies. The main goal of the Presidency's activity will thus be to ensure that the EU Macro-regional Strategies comply with the Council conclusions on the added value of macro-regional strategies, as adopted by the GAC on 22 October 2013.

It will be essential to ensure an appropriate follow-up by Member States and by the Commission to the "Concept and added value", with particular reference to horizontal community policies and results orientation, as well as to "Ownership and governance", with a special focus on the allocation of appropriate staff and the added value of strengthening EU territorial cohesion. Particular emphasis will also be given to embedding the objectives of the macroregional strategies in existing policy frameworks, programmes and financial instruments, especially in relation to the 2014-2020 programming period.

The Presidency is also committed to ensuring the implementation of the Council conclusions on the future prospects for macro-regional strategies, with particular regard to the Commission's report to the Council by the end of 2014 on improving the governance of the macro-regional strategies. Following the presentation by the European Commission of the "Communication on the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region and its Action Plan", the European Council will adopt the Strategy in October. The Presidency is committed to co-organising a "Kick-off event", in line with precedent EU Macro-regional Strategies, in view of the future implementation of EUSAIR.

The Italian Presidency of the Council is also committed to the successful preparation of the Action Plan for the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP), with particular reference to the crucial phase of stakeholders' consultation, scheduled to take place during the second half of 2014. Its final conference will take place in Italy by the end of 2014.

Atomic Questions

The Italian Presidency will work towards finalising the compromise text of the Council Regulation laying down maximum permitted levels for radioactive contamination of food and feed following a nuclear accident or any other case of radiological emergency, in the light of the negotiations conducted under the Hellenic Presidency.

The Italian Presidency will encourage the Council to work on conferring negotiating mandates to the European Commission with regard to the Diplomatic Conference on the proposal to amend the Convention of Nuclear Safety and the EURATOM Agreement between the EU and South Korea.

Finally, in full recognition of the relevance of nuclear liability and emergency preparedness, the Presidency will support any initiatives that the Commission may adopt during the six-month period, encouraging debate among Member States on these issues.

B. Foreign Affairs

Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)

Fully respecting the competencies foreseen by the Treaties with regard to the High Representative and EEAS, Italy will support them in their role and functions and will actively contribute to the shaping of more coherent and effective EU foreign policy, with a specific focus on promoting democracy, stability and prosperity in the closer neighbouring regions of the Mediterranean and the Western Balkans and on furthering respect for human rights; fostering EU Strategic partnerships with the goal of attaining joint synergies to address more effectively the most pressing challenges of today's world; supporting a more operational engagement with the EU's strategic partners, firstly and foremost through the ongoing negotiations in the political (SPAs/FAs) and economic fields (FTAs/EPAs).

The transition process in North Africa and the Middle East requires continuous commitment and support, in order to increase the EU's visibility and presence through credible offers to those partners. In support of the HR/VP, Italy will encourage the EU in promoting of the respect for human rights and civil liberties and will focus on political, economic and social progress in Egypt. Strong determination will be requested to reduce the uncertainty of the political and security scenario in Libya, ensuring appropriate follow-ups to the March 2014 Rome Conference in order to support and accompany a genuine and inclusive process of national dialogue and reconciliation, in order to pave the way towards a sustainable stabilisation of the country. In Syria efforts will be strengthened to end violence, provide humanitarian assistance and ensure a viable transition respecting the democratic aspirations of the Syrian population, and in Lebanon, to facilitate the stability of the country, also through appropriate assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces. The recent historical changes in the Mediterranean area have also highlighted the urgent need for progress in the Middle East Peace Process with the objective of achieving a just, viable and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on EU position of support to a two-State solution. Italy encourages the ongoing E3/EU+3 talks with Tehran aimed at reaching agreement on a comprehensive solution to the Iranian nuclear issue.

Italy will support the HR/VP in a continued coherent engagement with Asia-Pacific partners on all major global and regional challenges affecting sustainable growth, stability and security by encouraging, inter alia, the strengthening of regional fora. In particular, the Presidency will back efforts to swiftly implement the EU-China 2020 Agenda, to make progress in the negotiations for a Special Partnership Agreement with Japan, to encourage change in Myanmar, and to strengthen ties with the subcontinent and with ASEAN. In supporting the HR/VP, Italy will in its sphere of competence as EU rotating Presidency provide an impetus to the EU-US transatlantic dialogue on Asia-Pacific with the aim of encouraging democratic transition and consolidation in that area. It will support the positive conclusion of the EU's ongoing free trade and investment protection

negotiations. It will also ensure the successful outcome of the Milan ASEM Summit in October 2014, with a view to fostering growth and development in Europe and Asia and consolidating dialogue on political and economic cooperation and socio-cultural exchanges.

The US is the EU's main strategic partner. In support of the HR/VP and the EEAS, Italy will support development of EU-US relations. It will, in particular, encourage significant progress in negotiations for a TTIP -which will strategically enhance economic and trade relations across the Atlantic- and a continuing dialogue on energy security issues. As regards Canada the Strategic Partnership Agreement will be finalised and an EU-Canada Summit will be held.

Russia remains a strategic partner to address regional and global challenges. Therefore, Italy will encourage the EU to explore ways to revamp the dialogue between the European Union and Russia, and seize opportunities to enhance the strategic partnership, if the general context of reference could allow it. Democratization, modernisation and the perspectives of the Eastern Partnership will be given special consideration in the dialogue with Russia.

In Africa, bearing in mind the importance of assuring an appropriate follow-up to the EU-Africa Summit (April 2014), and in order to benefit from the EU Strategies for the Sahel and the Gulf of Guinea, Italy will aim at supporting HR work in particular on the Horn of Africa and especially Somalia. The second half of 2014 will be crucial in terms of fostering political inclusiveness and establishing the conditions for the approval of a definitive Somali Federal Constitution in 2015. In support of the HR/VP and the EEAS, Italy will encourage the convening of a high-level event on Somalia in the margins of the next United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) ministerial segment and will encourage the EU to continue to provide financial and political support to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) with a view to promoting Somali stabilization, regional economic integration and the achievement of a political solution to the crisis in South Sudan. It will also be important to reaffirm the EU commitment to the strategic partnership with South Africa, whilst keeping in mind the objective of the wider bi-regional EU-Africa partnership. Finally, in the areas under its responsibility as EU rotating Presidency, Italy will host the Euro-African Ministerial Conference on development and migration at the end of November.

The second half of 2014 will be a historically significant period for Afghanistan, following the presidential elections. Security during the electoral period will be ensured mainly by the Afghan security forces, with support from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which will conclude its mandate at the end of 2014 and will eventually be replaced by a new, non-combative mission. The international community, headed by the EU, will be heavily engaged in assuring a smooth and peaceful transition. In support of the HR/VP, Italy will encourage the implementation of the Strategy on EU-Afghanistan relations, support the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL), monitor the implementation of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework and foster regional cooperation within the framework of the Istanbul Process.

In the field of human rights and in view of the 69th session of the UNGA, Italy will support EU efforts on the fifth resolution for a moratorium on executions, with the aim of further increasing

the number of “Yes” votes, thus further strengthening the international trend for the abolition of the death penalty. Promoting women rights and combating gender-based violence will remain an important priority. Italy will also express full support for the promotion by the EU of a resolution aiming to contrast the practice of early and forced marriages. On this issue, a side-event will be organised in New York. While keeping the focus on sectarian violence and discriminations, the Presidency will support the EU initiatives on freedom of religion or belief and the protection of religious minorities, also in connection to Italy’s commitment to on genocide prevention and early warning mechanisms. Italy will back the EU initiative to resume the human rights dialogue with Iran.

In view of the approaching 2014 NATO Summit, and within the general framework of further developing the cooperation between the EU and NATO, Italy will aim at supporting the HR in convening high-level meetings; intensifying the dialogue in a pragmatic way on strategic issues with the aim of harmonising the strategic culture of both organisations; relaunching joint EU-NATO management exercises; increasing complementarities and avoiding duplications of the respective capabilities through multinational defence and training initiatives; jointly developing specific political initiatives in support of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325/2000, and related resolutions on Women, Peace and Security .

In supporting the HR/VP, Italy will encourage dialogue with Central American countries on security issues, enhance EU-Mexico relations and give renewed impetus to negotiations on an Association Agreement with Mercosur.

Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)

The Presidency will support the efforts to intensify the ongoing work to enhance the CSDP’s effectiveness, flexibility and visibility along the lines of action and deliverables identified by the November 2013 Foreign Affairs Council (Defence) and by the December 2013 European Council. In this light Italy will seek to explore, all mechanisms for cooperation within the EU using current models of ongoing initiatives as examples on which to build.

As the transatlantic partnership remains a cornerstone of the EU security and defence policy, the dialogue on NATO’s and the EU’s respective roles and common goals will be further stimulated and energised.

Successful accomplishment of CSDP missions is highly dependent on the acquisition of key military capabilities by Member States; Italy will therefore support the adoption of effective cooperation mechanisms both for the development of new capabilities, including those relating to the future Medium Altitude Long Endurance Remotely Piloted Air Systems (MALE RPAS), a new generation of communication satellites and cyber defence, and for the pooling and sharing of nationally owned assets with the aim of filling the gaps identified, e.g. the Multinational Modular Medical Units and the Air-to-Air Refuelling. In supporting the HR/VP and the EEAS, it will encourage the development of joint research and technology projects in the most promising fields, particularly those with dual (civilian and military) use, taking into account the opportunities

offered by Horizon 2020. Through an enhanced dialogue between EU institutions, Member States' and European defence industries, the Presidency will stimulate the adoption of concrete measures to strengthen the EU defence technological and industrial basis of EU defence, tapping into the potential offered by academia and SMEs. For all these issues the European Defence Agency (EDA) is an invaluable asset. Italy will rely on the EDA and will seek to assist in intensifying its role.

European defence market integration will be supported by encouraging tangible steps towards the implementation of Directives 2009/43/EC on transfers of defence-related products and 2009/81/EC on defence and security procurement and by focusing on the reinforcement of the EU Defence Security of Supply. Italy will support finding a wide consensus around the need to elaborate a policy framework, with a view to its adoption, for systematic and long-term defence cooperation and with the aim of pursuing a long-term convergence of military needs and requirements and the synchronisation of individual defence planning cycles.

Italy will also promote the raising of public opinion awareness, in particular among young generations, that security and defence are essential in terms of our peaceful democratic life and socio-economic development.

Moreover, building on the results of the December 2013 European Council on Defence, Italy will support Member States' efforts on shaping and applying the EU Maritime Security Strategy through a specific Action Plan, the aim of which is to enhance the maritime dimension of the EU, within the CSDP.

Italy will also support promoting closer cooperation between the EU and the United Nations on crisis management by co-organising a series of conferences on this issue.

As regards CSDP missions, Italy will, among others, support the implementation of the strategic review of EULEX Kosovo and the discussions on the mandate for EUFOR ALTHEA as well as on the future of EUPOL Afghanistan after 2014. Italy will promote the effectiveness of EUBAM Libya, in the light of the security situation on the ground, and will encourage the rationalisation and strengthening of the Somalia-related CSDP activities (including the anticipated refocusing of EUCAP Nestor on Somalia, the strengthening of EUTM Somalia and possible synergies with EUNAVFOR Atalanta). Italy will support the launch of a CSDP Mission to assist Ukraine in the field of civilian security sector reform, including policing and the rule of law. Concrete progress in implementing the comprehensive approach to crisis management and feasible exit strategies from CSDP operations will also be encouraged. Moreover, the Presidency will focus on the process of improving the EU's overall Rapid Reaction Capabilities, including the usability of Battlegroups.

Fight Against Terrorism

In the field of cooperation on counter-terrorism and other global threats (i.e. transnational organised crime, illicit trafficking, corruption, cybercrime and piracy), the Presidency will seek to enhance

European inter-agency cooperation and facilitate the EU's engagement with its international partners (i.e. the UN, the GCTF and the G8 Rome-Lyon Group/G7) within the framework of relevant international Conventions.

While counter-terrorism remains largely a responsibility of the Member States, the Presidency will encourage cooperation and dialogue within the EU and with other international partners, with a view to identifying priorities, sharing best practices and exchanging information, within the framework of a comprehensive approach and taking into account the nexus between development and security.

Specific attention will be paid by the Presidency to improving international cooperation in monitoring criminal justice and human rights compliance, and tackling certain cross-cutting factors such as radicalisation, recruitment and terrorist financing. In order to disrupt the financial support of terrorism, it is important to identify best practices with the aim of tracking financial streams, taking into account the role played by off-shore jurisdictions.

European Neighbourhood Policy

The EU Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is a test case for the Union's effective ability to act as a global player. The critical challenges in the Southern Mediterranean require the EU to provide an ambitious response. The Presidency will ensure that such a response is consistent with the commitments taken by the EU in the wake of the Arab revolutions to provide further support to countries embarking on the difficult path of transition in a region which is vital to the Union's values and interests.

The Presidency will pay special attention to the impact of EU assistance to our Mediterranean Partners, aimed at supporting internal reforms, strengthening democratic institutions, promoting sustainable and inclusive growth and fostering the role of civil society. Such assistance should therefore be tailored to each Partner's needs, fully complying with the principle of co-ownership. A smart implementation of the differentiation principle – "more for more" - entails an incentive-based approach, with countries making greater efforts and progress towards democratic reforms receiving more support.

At the same time, the Presidency will encourage the regional dimension of the ENP through stronger coordination with the Union for the Mediterranean, which is the appropriate forum for tackling sectoral issues and launching new cooperation programmes. The Presidency will also foster the strategic coordination of the main activities carried out in the region relating to investment in

the facilitation of private-sector development, and creating an enabling environment for business.

In the run-up to the 2015 Riga Summit, the Presidency focus will be on the implementation of the Association Agreements, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), with Georgia and Moldova. As far as Ukraine is concerned, attention will chiefly be devoted to support for the normalisation process and internal stability. Further to the signature and implementation of the remaining part of the Association Agreement, which will also establish a DCFTA, the Presidency will promote reforms and the country's economic recovery.

The Presidency will also work on deepening cooperation with Armenia by defining specific areas for future political and economic cooperation. Further progress is expected in the negotiations on the Association Agreement with Azerbaijan.

Common Trade Policy

A high-profile EU trade policy is a key tool in concluding an extensive network of ambitious and balanced free trade agreements, based on the principles of reciprocity and mutual commitment, effectively pursuing all European interests. Regional and multilateral trade agreements can contribute to the development of global rules, thus reinforcing the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) multilateral system and benefiting the ongoing negotiations on the Doha Development Agenda (DDA).

The Presidency intends to carry out its activities in the field of common trade policy in the multilateral domain in particular by enhancing the development of the multilateral trading system, providing every support to pursuing progress in the DDA - including the ratification and implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement and the definition of the post-Bali work programme - and by encouraging progress in the negotiations on the Information Technology Agreement (ITA), the multilateral Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) and the recently launched multilateral initiative on green goods.

As far as ongoing bilateral negotiations are concerned, the Presidency will actively contribute to advancing and, wherever possible, finalising agreements with our main trading partners. In this area, particular attention will be given to encouraging concrete results in the TTIP negotiation with the USA, finalising the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement with Canada and achieving concrete results with Japan and China (in the field of investment and Geographical Indications). As far as the ASEAN countries are concerned, we consider it important to speed up ongoing negotiations, including those with Malaysia, as well as to verify conditions for launching new trade deals with other partners in the region. Other priorities include re-launching negotiations with Mercosur; pursuing progress in launching and advancing negotiations on DCFTAs with partner countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean, in particular with Morocco, Jordan, Tunisia and - where appropriate - with Egypt; promoting discussions between the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council on the resumption of negotiations on the conclusion of a Free Trade Agreement and furthering the negotiations of the European Projects Association, in particular with the Southern African Development Community.

On a legislative level, the Italian Presidency intends to encourage the conclusion of Regulations on Trade Defence Instruments (TDI) modernisation and on the access of third-country goods and services to the Union's internal market in public procurement and reciprocal access to third countries' public procurement markets; and on trade in certain goods which could be used for capital punishment, torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Moreover, the Presidency intends to monitor the discussions on the draft Regulation setting up a voluntary Union system for due diligence by the supply chain in the self-certification of responsible importers of tin, tantalum and tungsten, their ores, and gold originating in conflict-affected and high-risk areas. Finally, the Presidency intends to foster the revision of Regulation (EC) No 428/2009 setting up a Community regime for the control of exports, transfer, brokering and transit of dual-use items.

Development

The Presidency will promote a common EU position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. During 2014, at the 69th session of UNGA, a process of intergovernmental negotiation will be launched aimed at adopting the new framework for Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Presidency will work closely with the Member States, the Commission, the EEAS and Partner Countries with a view to consolidating the global agreement on a single, integrated, overarching and universally applicable framework in the field of development.

The Italian Presidency will be engaged in raising awareness on food security and related issues. Agriculture and rural development are indeed crucial in the struggle to eradicate poverty. Therefore greater visibility will be assured in respect of the Commission's work on food security in order to highlight it as a priority within the framework of the definition of the Post-2015 Agenda. The Presidency will also work on two related issues: creating positive synergies with EXPO Milan 2015, whose central theme is "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life", and with the Second International Conference on Nutrition to be held at the FAO's Headquarters in November 2014. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), World Food Programme (WFP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Biodiversity International are pivotal in this sector, and the Presidency will work to further enhance cooperation between them and the EU.

The Italian Presidency will advance discussions on mainstreaming migration into development policies and interventions, as well as on the means of creating an enabling environment to maximise the positive impact of migration and mobility on development. Within this context, the Italian Presidency will seek to improve best practices, such as the efficient use of remittances, South-South cooperation and the involvement of diasporas in EU Member States in co-development projects.

The Italian Presidency will also continue the discussions on private sector development and engagement as a means of achieving sustainable and inclusive growth in partner countries, in the light of a more intensive dialogue with the private sector and civil society, in an action-oriented perspective.

Humanitarian Aid

With regard to humanitarian affairs, the Presidency will work with its partners to facilitate tangible progress in efforts aimed at improving the links between the humanitarian and the development response, in particular in the context of the process of revising the Hyogo framework for Action (HFA.2) and defining the post-development agenda (SDGs/MDGs) and the need to strengthen national capacities to respond to humanitarian emergencies.

Sharing knowledge and best practices within the EU - the world's largest donor of humanitarian aid - in terms of how to improve the coordination, capacity and effectiveness of the humanitarian response will also be a priority of the Italian Presidency.

During the Presidency, work with partners will continue in terms of how to ensure that all States and parties to an armed conflict can protect civilians in accordance with international humanitarian law, as well as in terms of ways to address gender-based violence and violence against children.

C. Economic and Financial Affairs

A new economic policy agenda

The present juncture calls for a profound change in the EU economic policy agenda towards the most effective policy strategy to restore growth, create jobs and rebuild a positive relationship between the Union and its citizens, based on broad ownership of European policy.

Growth is very low and unemployment at unacceptably high levels. The recovery remains weak and uneven, with the risk of even more divergence across Member States. Fiscal consolidation is still challenging in spite of the unprecedented efforts that have been made, because of subdued growth and very low inflation. Sustained growth, financial stability and fiscal sustainability go hand in hand with one another: establishing the conditions for an increase in potential growth is the best possible strategy for ensuring the sustainable provision of adequate public services and the social cohesion necessary in order for economic systems to prosper durably. It is a means of rekindling positive expectations, improving confidence and the overall economic climate, and thereby further boosting growth prospects.

The focus on structural reforms is the cornerstone of the new vision underpinning the Presidency's policy agenda. Reforms and the innovations they stimulate are the major driver of growth, especially if the reform effort is wide-ranging at national level and is simultaneous with analogous efforts in other countries.

To that end, the Presidency will put forward a new European economic policy agenda based on structural reforms and investments in growth and jobs. Following the assessment of the economic situation of the euro area and the common guidelines for Member States within the European Semester, the ongoing process of policy coordination could be strengthened in order to contribute to the maximisation of positive spillovers, and will attest to the added value of coordinated reform efforts across Europe. A common policy process, supported by an appropriate information strategy, can help to explain to citizens the rationale underpinning reforms and give a European dimension to a new growth strategy. Genuine and wide-ranging reform efforts should be encouraged and underpinned by appropriate incentives.

The Commission's review of the legislative package on economic governance scheduled for December 2014 will allow for a further assessment of the effectiveness of the current fiscal framework as well as of the macroeconomic imbalance procedure, so as to achieve coordination of policy actions and convergence of economic performances.

The Italian Presidency is committed to continuing work on deepening the EMU along the "four pillars" road map outlined in the report of the four Presidents ("Towards a genuine Economic and Monetary Union") and endorsed by the EU leaders in December 2012. While significant progress has been made in the field of financial stability and banking union, a decisive step forward is needed in order to take EMU integration to a new level. The progress achieved in coordinating budget decisions will form the basis for advancing the objective of a capacity to absorb external shocks and enhance the resilience of the euro area. The stronger the signal given by the euro area in terms of the irreversibility of the integration process, the sounder the economic climate for reforms and investment to foster growth and employment.

The review of the Europe 2020 Strategy represents an opportunity to refocus policy objectives and instruments on the true drivers of growth and on the investment and structural reforms necessary for ensuring job-rich, sustainable and inclusive growth. In this regard the Presidency will work towards the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy and encourage an effective policy debate in the ECOFIN Council.

Banking Union

The Presidency will oversee all the necessary arrangements for a successful start-up of the Single Supervisory Mechanism, due to take place in November 2014; it will be looking closely at the process of establishing the Single Resolution Board, which could start as soon as the Single Resolution Mechanism Regulation is published, as well as the process of ratification of the related Intergovernmental Agreement by the participating Member States.

In particular, the Presidency will steer the Council's oversight of and communications relating to the finalisation of the agreed comprehensive Balance Sheet Assessment, composed of Asset Quality

Reviews and Stress Tests by the European Central Bank, and the national and European follow-up actions, with due regard for financial stability considerations.

Strengthening the Regulation of Financial Markets

The Presidency will continue to work towards strengthening the regulation of financial markets, with a view to facilitating credit flows to the real economy and maintaining confidence in the sound and efficient functioning of financial markets and intermediaries. Financial market integrity, including the prevention of the misuse of the financial system for illicit purposes, will remain a priority.

As set forth in the Commission Communication on the Long-term Financing of the European Economy, Italy expects to contribute to the modernisation of the framework for long-term investors, such as insurance companies, pension funds and other long-term vehicles. In this connection, the Italian Presidency will work towards the implementation of the Omnibus II and Solvency II Directives as regards the insurance sector, with due attention also being given to pension funds through a revision of the Institutions for Occupational Retirement Provision (IORP) Directive. The Italian Presidency will aim at finalizing the legislation concerning the creation of a new category of pooled funds, the “European Long Term Investment Funds”.

Furthermore, the Presidency will seek agreement within the Council on possible improvements to the functioning of the European System of Financial Supervision following the review of the first few years of its activities.

The Italian Presidency will endeavour to make further progress on the Regulation proposed by the Commission aimed at restoring confidence in benchmarks, the integrity of which is critical in view of their widespread use as a point of reference in contracts and financial instruments.

In the banking sector, the Presidency will follow on from the Commission proposals to introduce structural measures to reduce the interconnectedness of extremely large banking groups with a view to improving prudential safeguards and reducing the possibility of using public funds in the event that a resolution process becomes necessary. Also the accompanying measures aimed at increasing reporting and disclosure of securities financing transactions in the shadow banking sector will be addressed. Finally, in its quest to subject ‘shadow banking’ activities to proper supervision, it will address the Commission proposal for the Regulation of money market funds.

Special emphasis will also be given to updating the regulatory framework for payment systems in order to reduce its present fragmentation among Member States and align it with recent technological innovations, ensuring that efficiency gains and payment security are passed on to consumers.

Finally, the Presidency will aim at finalizing - where feasible – will be encouraged in connection with the new Directive on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purpose of money laundering and terrorist financing as well as the Regulation on information accompanying transfers of funds to improve traceability of payments and to be fully compliant with international standards.

Taxation

In the area of taxation, the Italian Presidency will focus on issues relating to transparency and the fight against tax fraud and evasion. The Presidency will seek to finalise discussions on the amending Directive 2011/16/EU on administrative cooperation in the field of taxation, with the aim of extending the automatic exchange of information in line with new international standards. The Italian Presidency will also monitor negotiations on the revision of the agreements with third countries (Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino and Switzerland) on savings taxation. The Presidency will carry forward discussions on improvements to administrative cooperation in the field of VAT.

The Italian Presidency will also work on measures aimed at preventing double non-taxation. In this context, the Presidency will continue discussions on amending the Parent/Subsidiary Directive and carry forward work in the area of mismatches caused by hybrid structures. The Presidency will also take forward discussions on the Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (CCCTB), with a particular focus on the tax base elements and cross-border aspects, and on the Interests and Royalties Directive 2003/49/EC.

Building on the ongoing work at OECD level in the context of the Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) Action Plan and on the analysis carried out by the European Commission, the Italian Presidency will continue discussions on the issue of the taxation of the digital economy.

In the field of indirect taxation, the Italian Presidency will pursue discussions on improvements to the VAT system in order to make it more resilient and simpler for economic operators. The Presidency will further progress on the proposals on standard VAT returns and the VAT treatment of vouchers. The proposal on insurance and financial services will also be resumed and advanced as appropriate.

The Council will be working towards an agreement on the proposal on Energy Taxation. Moreover, the Presidency will work towards an agreement also on the Financial Transaction Tax, within the framework of an enhanced cooperation procedure taking due account of the implications for the proper functioning of financial markets.

EU Budget

The Council will consider the EU budget an important instrument to translate into real terms the objectives of growth and jobs. Consequently, the Italian Presidency will aim to adopt the Annual Budget so as to ensure the resources for an effective implementation of the new programmes within the Multiannual Financial Framework and of the outstanding commitments as well. Moreover, the Council will give an appropriate degree of attention to the sound financial management of EU funds, with due regard for the Annual report of the Court of Auditors.

D. Justice and Home Affairs

The Presidency will be committed to assessing the implementation and proper enforcement of the measures already adopted, and will encourage the Council to contribute to the full implementation of the strategic guidelines for legislative and operational planning within the area of freedom, security and justice as laid down by the June 2014 European Council.

JUSTICE

Justice for Growth

The Presidency will maintain a close link between the policies in the area of justice and home affairs and questions relating to economic growth and stability. To that end, special attention will be devoted to finalising the revision of the Regulation (EC) No 1346/2000 on insolvency proceedings, which includes alternative proceedings to bankruptcy as well as the insolvency of cross-border groups of companies.

The revision of the Regulation (EC) No 861/2007 on the European small claims procedure is also a priority of the Italian Presidency, with a view to increasing the use and efficiency of the procedure provided for in the Regulation.

The Presidency will also continue to take forward work on the European sales law Regulation.

Data Protection

The Presidency will strive to ensure coherence of the regulatory framework for protection of personal data across the various policy fields in the justice and home affairs sector.

Achieving substantial progress on the Data Protection package is among the priorities of the Italian Presidency.

Particular attention will be given to regulatory frameworks for the exchange of personal data with third countries for reasons of law enforcement and the prevention of serious crime.

Civil Law

The Presidency aims to achieve a significant outcome as regards negotiations on a Regulation simplifying the acceptance of certain public documents in the EU and abolishing the authentication requirements relating to these documents. The adoption of this instrument will facilitate the free movement and free establishment of citizens and businesses, while at the same time reducing the cost of authentication.

The Italian Presidency will also continue to take forward work on the jurisdiction, applicable law and recognition and enforcement of decisions regarding the property consequences of the registered partnerships Regulation as well as on the jurisdiction, applicable law and recognition and enforcement of decisions in matters of the matrimonial property regimes Regulation.

Criminal Law

The Presidency will focus on achieving progress in the negotiations in the Council on the proposal for a Regulation on the establishment of a European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) which, in cooperation with the Member States' authorities, will investigate, prosecute and bring to justice the perpetrators of crimes affecting the budget of the European Union. Against this background, the Presidency will also commence negotiations with the European Parliament on the proposal for a Directive on the protection of the EU's financial interests, on the basis of the general approach already established, in order to make progress towards its adoption. Likewise, particular attention will be given to the proposal for a Regulation reforming Eurojust, inter alia with a view to enabling it to perform the tasks needed to assist the work of the EPPO.

The Presidency will endeavour to make progress on the Commission's legislative proposals in the field of protection of the rights of suspected or accused persons within the framework of criminal proceedings, in order to achieve decisive progress in the implementation of the 2009 Roadmap. In particular the Presidency will bring forward the dialogue with the European Parliament on the proposal for a Directive on procedural safeguards for children suspected or accused of criminal proceedings, and will open discussions in the Council on the proposals for Directives on the presumption of innocence and legal aid.

Criminals and criminal organizations should be deprived of proceeds of any nature deriving from their illicit activities, however acquired; in this perspective the Presidency will promote discussions on how the principle of mutual recognition could be applied to all forms of confiscation based on a judicial decision.

Judicial training

The establishment of a European Public Prosecutor's Office, together with the adoption of ever more sophisticated instruments of cooperation among judicial authorities in criminal and civil matters, requires the proper training of judges, prosecutors and other stakeholders in the field of justice. The Presidency will step up the dialogue with the Commission, within the framework of the new Multiannual Financial Framework for Justice, in order to pursue the full implementation of the objectives set out in the communications on judicial training, in full cooperation with the European Judicial Training Network, the structure of which must be reinforced.

Detention

Bearing in mind the European Council Stockholm Programme conclusions and the Commission Green Paper on the application of EU criminal justice legislation in the field of detention, the Presidency will promote the strengthening of mutual trust and the enhancement of mutual recognition in the field of detention, supporting the implementation of Council Framework Decisions 2008/909/JHA on the mutual recognition of judgments in criminal matters, 2008/947/JHA on the mutual recognition of judgments and probation decisions and 2008/829/JHA on the mutual recognition of decisions on supervision measures as an alternative to provisional detention.

The Presidency will also promote the exchange of best practices in prison management.

e-Justice

The Presidency will work towards the finalisation of the work relating to the Commission proposal on e-Justice, which aims to establish a legal framework to facilitate access to justice throughout all the Member States and to facilitate judicial cooperation in civil, criminal and administrative law at

European level. Particular attention will be paid to striking a balance between the minimum rules approach and the need to integrate the legal framework for e-Justice.

Moreover, the Italian Presidency will encourage the wide dissemination of the “European Case Law Identifier”(ECLI) and the “European Legislation Identifier” (ELI) in the judicial database throughout the Member States, as well as a closer dialogue with the Supreme Courts Network, in order to increase the number of services on the e-Justice Portal, mostly in connection with civil matters.

HOME AFFAIRS

Migration

Bearing in mind that the European Union is subject to structural migratory pressures, the Presidency - partly as a consequence of the deep social and political changes affecting large neighbouring regions - will encourage the Council to update its action, also taking into account the European Commission's communication on the outcome of the work of the "Mediterranean Task Force" established by the JHA Council in October 2013 and welcomed in the European Council's conclusions of October and December 2013. In this context, the Council will promote the implementation of the lines of action of the "Mediterranean Task Force".

The Presidency intends to pursue the monitoring and implementation of the strategies outlined in the “EU action on migratory pressures”, calling on the European Union to focus its attention on the need to coordinate action taken by the Member States with the central role played by the relevant EU Agencies such as the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders (FRONTEX), the European Police Office (EUROPOL) and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO).

Moreover, it also intends to fully support FRONTEX efforts aimed at concluding operational cooperation agreements with third countries on border control and the fight against irregular immigration, which should promote ownership by the third countries concerned.

The Italian Presidency intends to encourage the further development of dialogue with third countries of origin and transit of migratory flows, in line with the EU Global Approach on Migration and Mobility, through the instrument of Mobility Partnerships, as well as through regional dialogues and processes, such as the Rabat Process. Together with the European Commission and the EEAS, the Presidency will also launch an initiative to establish a similar dialogue with the countries of Eastern Africa. Dialogue and cooperation with third countries will aim to give concrete support to legal channels of entry at political and economic level, as well as to prevent and combat irregular immigration and all related forms of crime by improving the institutional and operational capacities of the competent authorities of those countries.

The promotion of legal migration aims to contribute to the EU's action for growth and thereby prevent the possible abuse of legal migratory channels which may lead to the undermining of the credibility of the entire European migration system

Labour mobility, especially in the Mediterranean region, needs to be fostered, bearing in mind the positive effects of circular migration, within the framework of a policy of openness towards the third countries of origin.

In this context, the Presidency intends to continue, in particular, its efforts to define a proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, study, pupil exchange, remunerated and unremunerated training, voluntary service and au pairing.

The aim is to enhance the attractiveness of the European Union and promote the so-called "brain circulation", which could contribute to the growth of both the European Union and third countries.

The Presidency intends to strive to improve policies in favour of foreign unaccompanied minors, including children who are asylum seekers and/or victims of trafficking, through the analysis and the development of operational procedures and best practices in terms of reception and identification. In particular, as regards age assessment, the Italian Presidency deems it necessary to identify common European assessment criteria, mutually recognised by the States, through the development of tools which are immediately operational. Finally, taking up the call of the European Parliament, the Presidency intends to propose to the Member States the designation of a national

contact point which can act as a liaison with the European Commission to monitor the situation and the actions taken at national level.

Particular attention will also be focused on the continuous integration of third countries' nationals (including those in need of international protection). Based on best practices at EU level, the Presidency will endeavour to raise the level of European achievements in this field, along the lines of the European Agenda on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals.

Bearing in mind that interreligious dialogue is a factor of social cohesion, attention will also be focused on promoting and protecting freedom of religion and belief through social mediation and inter-cultural dialogue.

The Presidency accords priority to an effective and sustainable return policy, which fully respects the rights of migrants and takes into account the specific features of the countries of origin. For this purpose, the Presidency intends to support any initiative aimed at improving practical cooperation with the relevant third countries in this respect, encourage the analysis and exchange of best practices and foster the use of voluntary return systems, through information campaigns supported by the Commission and implemented by Member States.

Under the new strategy for the prevention of and fight against trafficking in human beings in 2012-2016, and bearing in mind the priorities set for the 2014-2017 policy cycle, the Italian Presidency will stimulate the development of coherent action to combat trafficking in human beings, including in the external dimension of the JHA area, with a particular focus on the aspects of prevention, victim protection and law enforcement activities, inter alia through the dissemination of best practices and the establishment of criteria for identifying victims, with particular reference to cases of gender-based violence and child abuse. In this regard, the Presidency intends to promote standard procedures for operators who come into contact with victims in order to systematically identify them and allow the competent authorities to take them into care. Furthermore, the introduction of a mechanism linking the authorities involved in the fight against trafficking and the institutions responsible for the recognition of international protection will be encouraged during the Italian Presidency.

Border Control

The Presidency considers it essential to continue efforts towards the further development of integrated border management in order to better control external borders and combat irregular immigration, the smuggling of migrants, trafficking in human beings and other forms of cross-border crime and transnational crime linked to the trafficking in human beings, while fully complying with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The Italian Presidency will also be committed to supporting policies that encourage the legal entry of third-country nationals into the European Union, while ensuring the security of European citizens.

The Presidency intends to support the development of negotiations on the Registered Traveller Programme (RTP) as well as on the Entry/Exit System (EES), also taking into account the outcome of the technical study of the European Commission and eu-LISA. Indeed, the “Smart Border package” aims at facilitating the transit of frequent travellers and monitoring the presence of third-country nationals in the Schengen area. As it represents an important step in strengthening an effective EU integrated border management system, the Presidency intends to continue to enhance developments on several aspects of the package, to undertake an in-depth examination of the questions relating to the cost-benefit issue and to promote further discussion on this matter.

The Presidency will encourage the monitoring of the full implementation of the Schengen Information System (SIS II) and the Visa Information System (VIS).

The Presidency intends to pay particular attention to the strengthening of synergies between the various bodies and systems set up to date, on the basis of their specific remit and scope: such as Frontex, SIS II and EUROSUR, operating within the framework of migration and the movement of persons and, in terms of security, Europol and Eurojust, working in the field of the prevention and suppression of the criminal offences linked to illegal transits.

With special regard to EUROSUR, the Presidency intends to promote the full implementation of the recently adopted Regulation in order to reduce the risk of the loss of lives at sea and combat the smuggling of migrants, trafficking in human beings, drug trafficking and other forms of cross-border crime.

The Presidency will give its support to the activities of FRONTEX, also with a view to promoting the possible conclusion of technical operational cooperation agreements with third countries on border control and the fight against irregular migration.

Asylum

The Presidency intends to engage in promoting the implementation of the Common European Asylum System, as well as in analysing and evaluating the effects of the entry into force of the various regulatory tools in Member States' systems.

Particular attention will be paid to the prevention of the phenomenon of “asylum shopping” and migrants' secondary movements to those Member States with more attractive reception conditions, bearing in mind that the criteria for determining the Member State responsible should be applied according to the hierarchy identified by the Dublin Regulation (EC) No 343/2003 and with due regard for fundamental rights, and in particular the right to family unity.

Attention will also be focused on the complex and unresolved question of the mutual recognition of national decisions on the international protection and free movement of the beneficiaries of protection, including the right to work in any State of the European Union.

Given the particular pressure on the national asylum systems of some Member States, partly because of mixed flows, the Presidency will continue its efforts to promote genuine solidarity at European level, in particular in emergency situations. In addition, it will support the further enhancement of the activities and role of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO).

Security for development: fight against crime

The Italian Presidency intends to focus its attention on the security for development issue in order to prevent and abolish the risks relating to economy infiltration.

The strengthening of the policies to combat criminal organisations, whose illegal profits damage the legitimate economy, is therefore at the heart of the Presidency's agenda, with specific reference to improving prevention tools, such as attacking illegal assets, and the traceability and monitoring of financial flows. To that end, the Presidency will encourage the adoption of a wide-ranging and structured approach whose primary objective is to confiscate the proceeds of illegal activities from organised crime.

The Presidency considers the sector of public procurement as a strategic and priority issue for the economic growth of the Union and the individual Member States. Organised crime, which relies on substantial financial resources derived from illegal activities, is able to distort the market and competition mechanisms, also infiltrating the field of public procurement. The Presidency will therefore encourage the prevention and suppression of all forms of criminal infiltration of the economy in this sector, with special attention to countering money-laundering activities in any form.

To that end, the Presidency considers it useful for the groups of experts set up within the Council to analyse in depth the effects of criminal action on the legal economy and to promote the strengthening of police information exchange through Europol and other bodies responsible for international operational cooperation.

A particularly effective action is aimed at developing measures to prevent and combat hate crimes, discrimination, and especially violence against women, according to the most recent models promoted by the international community and the national legislations.

Regarding information exchange and data protection, the Italian Presidency will be engaged in implementing the new Information Management Strategy (I.M.S.) and the Regulation of related points of contact.

In addition, the Italian Presidency deems it necessary to step up efforts in favour of the security of communication routes and, in particular, intends to focus on transport, controls on passengers and vehicles, thefts of copper along railway lines, safety in the transportation of dangerous and nuclear goods and measures to combat sabotage activities.

The Presidency aims to identify specific actions to prevent and counter illicit trafficking in firearms, also in the light of Commission Communication 716/2013 on firearms and the internal security of the EU: protecting citizens and disrupting illegal trafficking.

A special efforts will be made to prevent environmental crime and the counterfeiting of food products and goods in general, as well as the theft of metals.

Drugs

The Presidency will continue to work towards the full implementation of the EU Drugs Strategy 2013-2020 and the related European Action Plan on Drugs 2013-2016.

The Presidency will work on the proposals for new legislation on the control of new psychoactive substances (NPS) so as to have an effective instrument in the fight against this ever-increasing threat. It also considers it a priority to pay particular attention to alternative drug routes, i.e. trafficking via the web, in particular with regard to new psychoactive substances. Furthermore, the Italian Presidency intends to work with Member States to strengthen the system of International Conventions in the field of drugs. The Presidency will continue efforts with regard to the establishment of monitoring systems by Member States on prescription drugs abuse and will also oversee preparations for the 2016 United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS), in order to ensure a timely preparation of the EU and Member States' position within this framework. As provided for by the EU Strategies and Action Plans, the Presidency will also launch discussions among experts on drug demand indicators. Enhancing dialogue with third countries is also of utmost importance.

Fight Against Terrorism

The Italian Presidency's efforts in the fight against terrorism will focus on activities aimed at preventing and thwarting threats, while strengthening the European approach to preventive action, as formulated in the EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

The Presidency will encourage the European Union to continue to pinpoint critical infrastructures and develop plans for their protection, including transport services as well as power generation and transmission facilities. The Italian Presidency will accord special attention to the use of tools and

insidious methods used for terrorist purposes, to terrorist activities conducted by lone actors (“lone wolves”) or micro-cells and to improving the prior experience of multinational ad hoc teams.

Attention will be focused on the development of new methods of shared operative analysis, for both prevention and protection purposes, thus increasing the synergy between internal and external aspects.

The Presidency will also be committed to promoting the development of the negotiations on the proposal for a Directive on the use of Passenger Name Record (PNR) data for the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of terrorist offences and serious crime.

Finally, the Presidency will ensure the possible follow-up to the approval of the Council decision on the arrangements for the implementation by the Union of the solidarity clause, including preparedness measures.

Cybersecurity

On the basis of the Joint Communication “An Open, Safe and Secure Cyberspace”, the Presidency will support the finalisation of the Commission proposal for a Directive aimed at enhancing network and information security across the EU and cybersecurity preparedness and capabilities at national level.

The Presidency will encourage Member States to engage with industry and academia by setting up public/private partnerships, as a key component of national cybersecurity, and cooperate with the Commission, Europol and all relevant stakeholders in supporting the training of Member States to strengthen cyber capabilities to combat cyber threats.

With a view also to the CSDP, the Presidency will ensure the implementation of all aspects of the EU Cyber Strategy. The Italian Presidency will promote training and education in cyber defence, further improving the existing mechanisms for Pooling and Sharing.

With regard to cybercrime, the Presidency intends to promote concrete actions to prevent and combat cyber threats (cybercrime, attacks on critical infrastructure, online bank fraud and scams, child pornography on the Internet and cyber bullying), by strengthening operational cooperation

between the police forces and partnership actions between the institutions, information technology and financial sector businesses, the academic world and the relevant NGOs.

The Presidency will fully support the 7th round of mutual evaluation on cooperation on cybercrime.

Visa Policy

The Commission proposal for amending the visa code will be the main item of discussion between the Council and the Parliament during the Italian Presidency. A streamlining of procedures, with substantial simplification which does not jeopardise security, should be the final outcome, with the aim of encouraging mobility to the EU.

The Italian Presidency will give its utmost attention to visa policy, within the framework of mobility dialogues with third countries. The Presidency will encourage negotiations on visa facilitations aimed at balancing the Union's relations with its neighbours in both the Mediterranean area and the Eastern Partnership. Moreover, strategic priority will be given to the launch of negotiations with China, within the framework of the high-level dialogue on migration and mobility.

Civil Protection

The Presidency attaches great importance to civil protection policy. The Decision on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism reforms and strengthens cooperation in this area by opening up new perspectives, particularly in the area of community resilience and disaster risk reduction. Within this framework, the Italian Presidency will focus on the issues of both disaster prevention and response. On the one hand, it will aim to contribute to the implementation of the most important part of the prevention policy introduced by the new Decision, regarding the EU's risk management capability and the sharing of information on risk management. On the other hand, following lessons learnt from recent experiences outside the European Union and the opening of the new Emergency Response and Coordination Centre in Brussels, it will work on how to further strengthen support for the civil protection capacities in respect of humanitarian emergency assistance. In this regard it will table innovative proposals on the joint use of resources, based on complementarity, coherence and efficiency, in both disaster response and disaster risk reduction actions.

Customs Cooperation

The Italian Presidency will ensure the proper implementation of the 7th action plan of the Strategy for future customs law enforcement co-operation, for the period from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2015.

The Presidency will analyse the phenomenon of undervaluation in order to monitor the possible involvement of criminal organisations, to share data and best practices and to assess the needs for specific tools to increase customs cooperation in this field.

Taking into account the current situation as regards excise fraud in the customs context and the identification of available tools, best practices and needs, the Council will work on conclusions aimed at enhancing cooperation between Member States in the field.

E. Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs

An inclusive European economy

In the light of the legacy of the financial and economic crisis, there is an urgent need to prevent the collapse of social cohesion and its dramatic consequences not only in social terms, but also from the viewpoint of economic and democratic governance. Therefore, the Presidency will focus on the following priorities: fight against poverty, the reconstruction of human capital, resilience to asymmetric shocks and the importance of the social economy. The aforementioned objectives will be pursued in connection with and within the framework of the mid-term review of the EU2020 Strategy. On the basis of the Commission's Communication and during the ongoing public consultation, the Italian Presidency will encourage a general debate within the EPSCO Council, the main outcome of which in the areas of employment, poverty and social exclusion will contribute to the review of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Within this framework, the Presidency will encourage discussions on the most appropriate measures.

A more inclusive decision-making process, based on the involvement of social partners, will also be actively pursued as a means of further increasing confidence in the EU institutions.

Greater Employment Opportunities – Focus on Youth

High unemployment and inactivity, particularly among the youth, are today's most serious challenges to the European Union. A much higher level of attention and resources will be directed at tackling this problem: ultimately, the competitiveness of EU economies, the future prosperity of its society and the sustainability of its welfare systems depend on the productivity of the labour force, tapping the potential of key growth sectors. The Presidency will work towards the implementation of the EU employment strategy, focused on such instruments as the Youth Employment Initiative and the Youth Guarantee. Increasing high-quality labour mobility will also be a key theme for the Presidency.

With specific regard to employment policies, the priorities of the Presidency are to support youth employment, to foster transnational and cross-border mobility and to make the labour market more inclusive.

The Presidency will direct its attention at the employability potential of the third sector and the social economy and at the job opportunities arising from the transition to a green economy.

As far as the Youth Employment Initiative and its impact on active labour market policies are concerned, Youth Guarantee Programmes are being implemented and will start delivering results in 2014. The Presidency will support implementation by fostering peer review and exchange of best practices, thus encouraging early adoption of the measures necessary to increase the employment of drop-outs, Not engaged in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) and women, such as apprenticeship, traineeship and improvement of access to information on the services provided by public and private employment services.

Within the framework of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Employment Initiative Programmes, the Presidency will encourage the exchange of best practices in order to compare the different systems. Particular attention will be accorded to the role of the public employment services, whose functioning is key to ensuring effective matching between labour demand and supply. The question of worker mobility will represent one of the priorities of the Italian Presidency. Transnational mobility represents an important instrument in support of the objectives set out in the Europe 2020 Strategy. The Presidency will pursue negotiations on the proposal for a Regulation on a European Network of Employment Services, workers' access to mobility services and the further integration of labour markets (EURES).

Those instruments will be crucial not only for the success of the Youth Employment Initiative, but also in order to help those who have lost their jobs as a consequence of the crisis to remain in the labour market and find a new job as soon as possible.

Special attention will also be given to the recognition of the added value of the social and green economy, including in terms of job creation.

Rights of Workers

The Presidency will launch discussions on the proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on seafarers, amending Directives 2008/94/EC, 2009/38/EC, 2002/14/EC, 98/59/EC and 2001/23/EC, aimed at improving working conditions, the protection of workers against insolvency of employers, information and consultations of workers and health and safety at work. The Presidency welcomes the Commission Communication on the new Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014 – 2020.

As far as labour inspection is concerned, the Presidency will devote a thematic day of the Senior Labour Inspectors Committee (SLIC) – to be held in Italy in November – to the issue of flexible jobs as employment opportunities and measures to counter excessive precariousness: actions to safeguard health and safety, social security and working conditions. The Presidency will also advance the work on the recent Commission proposal for a Decision to establish a European platform to combat undeclared work.

The fight against undeclared work constitutes the most important element of the overall strategy to support employment and economic growth, forming a constant strategic focus of the inspection activities.

Social Investment

The Presidency will accord particular attention to the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy focusing on indicators of poverty and/or social exclusion chosen as targets.

The Italian Presidency will continue the discussion within the Council as regards the social investment package that seeks to improve the adequacy and sustainability of social systems, making the best use of the EU funds to support social investment programmes. Particular attention will be paid to social innovation since social policies require constant adaptation to new challenges. Informal discussions within the Council on the social investment package will continue with a particular focus on the implementation by Member States of the 2008 European Commission recommendation on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market, based on targeted, conditional and more effective support. In particular, in order to promote the definition of efficient and adequate income support measures, the Presidency will promote the development of

the methodology to establish reference budgets, also making available the experience gained by its national statistical institute in the definition of a measure of absolute poverty.

With the aim of reinforcing the role of the social economy in the context of the European Social Model, the Presidency will support and promote employment in the third sector, push for the co-design of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) interventions with companies and stakeholders and encourage synergic efforts in terms of systematic data collection on in respect of non-profit organisations.

Social Dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union

The development of the EMU's social dimension will be one of the priority themes during the Italian Presidency. The long-lasting financial and economic crisis has demonstrated that structural economic reforms must be accompanied by measures aimed at economic recovery and ensuring social cohesion. The Presidency will continue ongoing discussions on this issue. Special attention will be paid to the issue of automatic stabilisation through discussions on the possible establishment of an EMU-wide unemployment benefit system as a tool for asymmetric shock absorption at central level, without undermining the obligations of individual Member States to carry out structural reforms aimed at improving resilience, productivity and long-term economic fundamentals.

Along the lines of the Commission Communication on the social dimension of the EMU, the Presidency accords utmost importance to better monitoring and taking into account the social and labour market situation within the EMU. This would allow for a broader understanding of the social developments within the framework of the European Semester, so that the Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs) can take account of the economic and social dimensions in a more balanced manner.

The coordination of economic, employment and social policies will be further enhanced in line with existing procedures while fully respecting national competences. This requires more work to strengthen cooperation between the various Council configurations, in particular between EPSCO and ECOFIN, in order to ensure policy consistency.

The social dialogue involving the social partners at both Member State and European level will be enhanced in the coordination of economic and employment policies at EU level. The October Tripartite Social Summit will allow a consultation of social partners on several subjects, including EMU.

Equal opportunities for Men and Women

In view of the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), the Italian Presidency will provide a thorough assessment of the implementation since 2010 of the objectives included in the twelve critical areas of concern defined by the BPfA, in the context of EU policy priorities and targets, with the aim of presenting the most recent situation and identifying achievements, gaps and future challenges in each area at both EU and national level. The review will propose recommendations for further actions to promote gender equality in the EU, which will serve as a useful basis for the definition of the global post-2015 development goals. Within this framework, the Presidency will organise a specific Conference on the Beijing Platform for Action with ministerial participation and will take forward negotiations within the Council on the Directive on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges. The gender issue will be pursued as one of the priorities in policies and the evaluation of corporate social responsibility actions and impact.

Non-discrimination

The Presidency attaches great importance to the implementation of the principle of non-discrimination, as enshrined in Article 19 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and as specified in the Racial Equality Directive 2003/43/EC, as well as in the Framework Employment Directive 2000/78/EC. The Presidency will accord special attention to the need to strengthen non-discrimination, promoting a high-level conference and taking forward negotiations within the Council on the Directive 2003/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. With a specific focus on Roma inclusion, the Presidency will host the Fourth Meeting of the National Roma Contact Points in order to strengthen relevant initiatives in implementing national strategies in accordance with the EU Framework.

Furthermore, during Employment Week the Italian Presidency will focus on diversity management.

Health

Due to their cross-cutting nature, health-related issues represent a priority for the Italian Presidency, which will be engaged in involving the third sector, such as active healthcare organisations.

The Presidency will promote healthy lifestyles and prevention, within the conceptual framework of the “Health for Growth” EU programme, also taking into account gender differences, with a special view to the prevention of respiratory diseases and cancer.

The Italian Presidency will invite its European partners to consider the outcome and perspectives of the fight against HIV/AIDS – ten years after the Dublin Declaration on the partnership against this disease. Priority will be given both to vaccines as an effective tool for public health, also aiming at the adoption of Council conclusions, and to antimicrobial resistance.

As regards healthcare, more work will be done to guarantee the quality of services in order to ensure the greater safety of patients. Given the adverse economic cycle, special attention will be given to the issues of efficiency, efficacy and the cost-effectiveness of healthcare delivery.

The Italian Presidency intends to promote public discussion on patient safety and care-related infections. Discussions will also be held on dementia, the treatment of pain and palliative therapies.

Health research plays a primary role with regard to the aforementioned issues and a discussion on this specific issue will be launched during the Informal Meeting. Ministers will consider the benefits for patients arising from research and innovations in the pharmaceutical and medical devices sectors.

The Italian Presidency will focus on the review of the Regulations on medical devices and in-vitro diagnostic medical devices. The Presidency will also explore whether and how to take forward the review of the Directive 89/105/EEC on the transparency of measures regulating the prices of medicinal products for human use and their inclusion within the scope of public health insurance systems.

Furthermore, the Presidency provides a venue for a wide-ranging reflection on health in the Mediterranean area, also facilitating the sharing of experiences among experts from the Southern countries, so as to revive collaboration and define shared goals and strategies.

F. Competitiveness

Competitiveness

The economic crisis has heightened the importance of competitiveness for the recovery, as well as the need to accord the highest priority to Europe's growth and competitiveness policies. To that end, the Presidency will encourage the EU to gear all its policies towards improving the business environment, enhancing productivity, fostering innovation and exploiting the potential of both traditional and emerging sectors. The Council will implement essential growth-enhancing measures within the framework of the Single Market, Industrial competitiveness, Research and Innovation and the Space policy. Many initiatives are embedded in the Europe 2020 strategy, the European semester, and in particular the "Compact for Growth and Jobs".

Modernising consumer protection, speeding up work on intellectual property and strengthening custom policy are also priority strands of action. The Presidency will also pay adequate attention to the manufacturing sector, with a particular focus on the new generation of industrial policy measures building on the orientations given by the March 2014 European Council. Special emphasis will be placed on SMEs, with a view to supporting their integration in global value chains. In particular, innovative start-ups established across all sectors can play a key role in fostering sustainable growth, technological development and job creation – especially for young people. To foster growth, particular attention will also be paid to reducing the remaining unjustified obstacles to the full implementation of the Services Directive, which are hampering the creation of an efficient and competitive single market. Competitiveness is also closely linked to innovation and knowledge. Supporting the implementation of Horizon 2020, removing the bottlenecks to a real mobility of researchers in the European Research Area and better aligning national research priorities will be at the core of the Presidency agenda to help maintain a competitive edge and economic growth.

Increasing the efficiency of public administrations, reducing the administrative burden and simplifying regulation across policy areas are also important for promoting a more business-friendly environment and competitiveness. Besides improving the relationship with citizens, public administration modernisation is key to promoting job creation, as recently underlined in the 2014 Annual Growth Survey. Within this framework, the Italian Presidency will support those initiatives aiming to improve policy coordination among states and EU institutions for administrative capacity-building and Public Administration modernisation, with a particular focus on the full use of new information and communication technologies to deliver better services, on the reduction of the administrative burden, on the enhancement of the quantity and quality of open data and on the wider engagement of citizens in the definition and implementation of public policies.

Single Market

Although the single market is the cornerstone of European integration, it has yet to be fully exploited. The European institutions, also through the Compact for Growth and Jobs, have identified the deepening of the single market as a key factor in promoting competitiveness and jobs. Nevertheless, the economic and financial crisis in the past few years has put the Single Market agenda under pressure. Therefore, the Italian Presidency will be committed to re-launching the genuine significance of the internal market throughout a focused approach to be developed during the Italian Presidency.

Special efforts will be made to complete the proposals put forward in the Single Market Act II, such as the measures on investment funds to encourage long-term investment in the real economy. Besides, other main areas include services, the digital single market, the single energy market, the definitive completion of the State Aid modernisation reforms and the intellectual property framework. The Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT) needs also to be taken into account as a horizontal tool for more tailored measures. The Italian Presidency will encourage the adoption of all the remaining proposals, such as the measures on investment funds, to encourage long-term investment in the real economy, and the measures on the coordination of social security systems and on highly mobile workers.

Moreover, the Italian Presidency programme will be focused on a new “Approach to the Internal Market” (AIM), since the European Union now needs a strongly integrated economic platform and a coherent set of policies. The Italian Presidency will therefore launch a debate on the role of the internal market for growth, innovation and jobs within the framework of the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Within this context, the Presidency will encourage each Member State to highlight a target area where action may be needed to further develop the single market and possible measures to be taken (e.g. review of EU legislation, soft law, peer reviews), in order to help find common ground on a set of measures to increase Europe’s economic integration.

The Presidency will accord special priority to policy areas which have a positive short and medium-term impact on EU competitiveness, with a special focus on SMEs, linked to three capital drivers for growth: industrial competitiveness (in line with the March 2014 European Council Conclusions), innovation policies, trade and export policies (above all, challenges and opportunities resulting from the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership - TTIP).

The new AIM will provide an opportunity for possible mainstreaming of competitiveness across all the EU policy areas, in particular through the COMPET Council.

Intellectual Property

The protection of intellectual property rights represents a key factor for growth and employment, especially in a global world. Moreover, as part of the construction of a digital single market by 2015, the definition of an appropriate regulatory framework for the protection of intellectual property is becoming increasingly evident.

The acquis in the field of copyright and related rights has largely been harmonised. However, a discussion might be possible on the basis of the Commission's forthcoming document.

In the area of the Protection of Industrial Property, the Italian Presidency will continue to work on the reform the trademark system, which aims to upgrade, rationalise and modernise the existing legislation in order to make the system for registering a trademark across the EU more accessible and more effective for companies, improving the protection of this vital asset against counterfeiting.

The Italian Presidency will also focus on the negotiations on the proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of undisclosed know-how and business information against their unlawful acquisition, use and disclosure, working towards the definition of a harmonised legislative framework on trade secrets which boosts technological cooperation and the exchange of know-how.

Company law

The Italian Presidency considers that a modern and efficient corporate governance framework for European undertakings, investors and employees is a key component for the successful implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy. An attractive environment for shareholders contributes to growth, job creation and EU competitiveness and sustains the long-term financing of the European economy, addressing some of the weaknesses identified during the latest economic crisis. In this vein, the Italian Presidency will pursue a thorough examination of the recently adopted proposal on a shareholders' rights Directive, with a view to reaching a swift agreement in the Council.

Particular attention will also be paid to those proposals aimed at reducing the costs connected to cross-border operations of economic entities. In this vein, the Italian presidency will pursue a thorough examination of the recently adopted Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on single-member private limited liability companies), and will follow up on the work carried out by the Greek Presidency on the Regulation on the Statute of the European foundation).

Technical harmonisation

Technical harmonisation is vital for the elimination of a wide range of obstacles which hinder the free movement of goods within the internal market.

The Presidency attaches utmost importance to the proposal for a Regulation concerning type-approval requirements for the deployment of the eCall in-vehicle systems which would play a crucial role in significantly reducing the number of injuries and fatalities in road accidents. The Presidency's objective is to reach an early second-reading agreement with the European Parliament on this dossier.

The Italian Presidency is also committed to seeking progress on the debate within the Council on the proposal for a Regulation simplifying the transfer of motor vehicles registered in another Member State. The Proposal is essential in order to eliminate administrative barriers governing motor vehicles' re-registration procedures. The Presidency will resume discussions after the release by the European Commission of supplementary analysis on the dossier's tax-related aspects, which is expected to be published in the autumn of 2014, with a view to reaching a possible common position among Member States and a subsequent first-reading agreement with the European Parliament.

The Presidency will also continue the discussions within the Council on the New Alignment Package concerning the proposals for Regulations on cableway installations, personal protective equipment and appliances burning gaseous fuels. The three proposals are intended to replace the existing Directives with three Regulations, in line with the Commission's simplification objectives, and to align them with the "goods package" adopted in 2008 and in particular the New Legislative Framework Decision (2008/768/EC).

Industrial Policy

The Italian Presidency will promote an integrated industrial policy approach to all policies and instruments impacting on the competitiveness of European industry. SMEs are at the core of the Presidency's Programme in terms of industrial policy as a strategic element within global value chains. Innovative companies are increasingly being identified as strategic drivers which can help create a more innovation-friendly business environment, increasing social mobility, as well as attracting investments and talented people from abroad to the European Union.

In this context, the Council will also encourage the thorough implementation of the Small Business Act based on the report of the SME Envoys.

The Presidency, on the basis of the Commission Communication on a European Industrial Renaissance, will assess progress in the implementation of the European Council mandate to the Council. The Presidency will ensure that the COMPET Council deals with the microeconomic aspects of the Europe 2020 strategy, while enhancing the role of the High-Level Group on Competitiveness and Growth, delivering industrial policy input to the Council.

The Presidency will support the definition of a framework that systematically includes the Industrial Renaissance in all policies impacting on competitiveness.

Within this framework, the Presidency will focus on sectors in transition and "horizontal" drivers of growth for the development of an advanced manufacturing system such as Key Enabling Technologies (KETs), disruptive technologies and lead markets.

As far as the defence sector is concerned, the Presidency will assess progress in the implementation of the conclusions of the December 2013 European Council and the Foreign and Defence Council of November 2013 for a well-functioning defence market, based on openness, equal treatment, opportunities and transparency for all European suppliers. With reference to the Communication "Towards a more competitive and efficient defence and security sector", the Presidency will promote greater access of SMEs to both Defence and Security markets, as well as R&D, and will foster the development of value chains in the defence industry. It will encourage Member States and EDA to submit proposals on how to promote regional networks and strategic clusters and on financial options for supporting SMEs. Furthermore, the Presidency will encourage Member States to continue to invest in R&D, inter alia by maximising synergies between national and EU investments and between civil and defence research and identifying relevant research topics which could be funded under a preparatory action from the European Commission. The Presidency will work to set up a EU framework allowing and improving the mutual use of civilian and military research for dual-use applications, including results on the "key enabling technologies" stemming from Horizon 2020 and other civilian-focused programmes.

The Presidency will encourage the mechanism of cooperation in the defence sector in the context of the European Commission Task Force on Defence Industry & Market and will monitor the status of the implementation of the relevant European Regulations and Directives on transfers of the defence-related products and arms within the Union, focusing on the strengthening and the effectiveness of the controls by the EU Member States.

Better Regulation

The Presidency will strengthen efforts to ensure that EU legislation is “fit for purpose” through the effective use of smart regulation tools (regulatory costs reduction, impact assessment, evaluation and stakeholder consultation), particularly for SMEs and micro-enterprises, also on the basis of stakeholder consultation. The Italian Presidency will pay special attention to progress made by the Commission's REFIT programme, focusing on cooperation between the European Commission and Member States in producing joint evaluations. The Presidency will promote the reduction of the regulatory burden, inter alia through a specific EU programme, the simplification proposed and adopted by EU institutions in order to decrease unnecessary and excessive costs for businesses, as well as the use of impact assessment in the Council. Progress on the Smart Regulation will also be addressed through Council conclusions.

Consumer Rights

Consumer policy is of central importance for maximising consumer welfare and ensuring their freedom of choice. The Presidency attaches the utmost importance to the "two Regulations" package of Consumer Product Safety and Market Surveillance, which is aimed at both strengthening consumer protection and creating a level playing field for businesses. Rules on the origin of goods represent a major step forward in this respect. The Presidency's objective will be to achieve agreement on both proposals. The Presidency will also aim to reach agreement on the proposal for a Directive on package tourism travel.

Customs Union

The Italian Presidency will focus on the review of the Regulation (EC) No 515/97 on mutual administrative assistance between the administrative authorities to ensure the correct application of the legislation on customs and agricultural matters.

The Presidency will further explore the possibilities for continuing discussions on the Commission's proposal to approximate customs infringements and sanctions, with the dual objective of strengthening customs compliance and ensuring the equal treatment of operators.

The Presidency will work on governance in the customs area in order to simplify the policy-making process, inter alia by according a more strategic role to Council preparatory bodies in the field of customs, including the reporting mechanism.

The Italian Presidency will work on enhancing the EU's commitment to speeding up the e-Customs review (including the development of a Customs Single Window for IT systems/interfaces) and enhancing trade facilitation between the EU and the Mediterranean and Balkan areas, by implementing the Regional Convention on preferential Pan-Euro-Med rules of origin.

Tourism

Since tourism is a key growth factor for Europe, an all-encompassing strategy should be established in order to reinforce Europe's brand positioning, including as the world's number one destination for both cultural and sustainable tourism.

Against this background, the Presidency, in cooperation with the European Commission, will host the 13th European Tourism Forum in order to share best practices and focus on policies for enhancing tourism across Europe. Within this framework, measures will be discussed to simplify existing visa procedures and facilitate the movement of non-EU citizens in Europe.

The Presidency will explore the possibility of developing a European digital strategy aiming to promote tourist services, cultural itineraries and tourist experiences. Moreover, attention will be paid to the development of mobility plans and intermodal transport services for improving the access to and usability of territories and places which are off the main infrastructural tracks, while enhancing the cultural, landscape and environmental heritage.

Finally, a special focus will be placed on the labour force in the tourism sector. The Italian Presidency deems it necessary to invest in specialised advanced training courses and to create a network of European best practices in the academic field in order to train a generation of tourism professionals whose quality standards are both high and consistent. Within this framework, advanced and innovative tourist service management models will be promoted, also involving private entities, especially in historically, artistically and environmentally relevant sites, to pave the way for new professions and synergies.

Research and Innovation

In the context of the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Italian Presidency plans to propose a political discussion and Council conclusions on research and innovation as new sources of growth, building on the Commission's Communication on this topic. In this context, attention will be paid to aspects which have a positive impact on growth and employment, in particular fostering public/private partnership in research; promoting demand-side innovation policies; simplifying and streamlining research and innovation policies; and promoting social innovation.

In order to ensure a dynamic continuity with the Greek Presidency, the Italian Presidency intends to further advance preparations for the initiative for a "Partnership in Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area" (PRIMA), based on Article 185 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). On this issue, a discussion and Council conclusions will be proposed. Bearing in mind the considerable emphasis on marine and maritime sectors and blue innovation as important pillars for a sustainable socio-economic growth, the Presidency will organise specific events and work with the Commission and Member States to define a Blue Growth flagship initiative for the Mediterranean.

Convinced that open and productive research infrastructures will significantly advance Europe's capacity to generate new ideas and create jobs, the Italian Presidency will devote the COMPET/ Research Informal Ministerial meeting to infrastructures. Discussions will take into account the implementation of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) roadmap as well as the European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) instrument, ensuring coherence with smart specialisation strategies at regional and macro-regional level.

Bearing in mind that the establishment of an authentic European Research Area (ERA) is important for maintaining the European research systems on the leading edge of the advancement of knowledge, especially in times of fiscal constraints, the Presidency will address this topic, taking into account the anticipated Second Annual ERA Progress Report by the Commission, with a view to adopting Council conclusions. Special emphasis will be given to boosting political commitment to joint EU research programming, with the aim of visibly reducing fragmentation and eliminating unnecessary duplication, as well as promoting the ERA's human resources component, and in particular the next generation of researchers.

In addition, the Presidency plans to address the European social challenges tackled by Horizon 2020 with a specific conference on the future of science with and for social activities, with primary reference to the European Cultural Heritage. The Italian Presidency intends to place social innovation and a new model of social entrepreneurship at the very centre of its efforts to support inclusive and sustainable growth, boosted by the remarkable efforts made by the European Commission with the Social Innovation Initiative. The aspects of smart communities, social innovation scalability through technology and science and financing of social innovation will be at the very heart of the debate to be proposed by the Italian Presidency.

On a technical working level, the Italian Presidency deems it important to carry out an initial stocktake on the framework programme Horizon 2020. In particular, it is important to analyse the outcome of the first calls for proposals in order to steer the subsequent phases and ensure that the programme is fully exploited in terms of the European Union's scientific, industrial and social growth, also in synergy with the use of the European Structural and Investment Funds. The Presidency will also pay attention to the valorization of key enabling technologies with the organisation of a dedicated three-day event. A SET-Plan conference will address the specific issue of energy.

Space

The Italian Presidency will continue the political discussions on relations between the European Union and the European Space Agency (ESA) in accordance with Article 189 of the TFEU and the

COMPET Council conclusions "Establishing appropriate relations between the EU and the ESA",
adopted on 18 February 2013.

The Italian Presidency will launch discussions on the Commission's Proposal for a Directive on the identification and dissemination of High-Resolution Earth Observation Satellite Data (HRSD) for commercial purposes, aiming to ensure the proper functioning and development of the internal market for high-resolution satellite data products and services by establishing a transparent, predictable, fair and coherent legal framework across Member States.

Discussions will also be launched on future EU space programmes and infrastructures aiming to further support the Union's policies and for the benefit of European citizens.

Furthermore, the Italian Presidency will promote an international event on the Copernicus Programme, focusing on the potential contribution to EU policies and actions in the areas of border control, maritime surveillance, preservation of cultural heritage and external action. These are key themes for Europe and, in particular, for the Mediterranean region. The event will also help to better promote the role of "Space" not just as a strategic priority sector for the EU, but also as a key driver of the European economy.

G. Transport, Telecommunications and Energy

In order to enhance the EU's competitiveness, growth and jobs and within the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy mid-term review, the role of digital technologies, energy and transport is key. Infrastructures development, single market completion, security of supply, reduction of energy costs, digitalisation and enhanced mobility are essential enablers for the EU economy.

Transport

The Italian Presidency intends to contribute to the achievement of the major objective of creating a single European transport area, especially bearing in mind that infrastructure and transport sectors play an important role in ensuring economic growth, creating employment and fostering European economic and social cohesion.

Given their major contribution to the European transport infrastructures, priority will be given to the European TEN-T Corridors. The first goal will be to strengthen the EU TEN-T Corridors' governance with the aim of pursuing the rationalisation and harmonisation of the existing legal framework, planning, governing, financing and implementing the TEN-T Corridors. Special attention will also be given to defining infrastructure priorities and to resources allocation set up by TEN-T Fund.

In the light of the growing need for investments in infrastructures, the Presidency will stimulate a strategic debate on the attraction of private capital and on the need to grant Member States more flexibility in using the public budget to finance major cross-border projects of EU interest. The informal Transport Council will be the occasion for Member States to define a shared European strategy on these issues.

Land Transport

The Presidency will promote open discussions to assess the possibility of creating a truly single and open EU rail market, together with the efficient and cost-effective governance of priority freight corridors.

In order to contribute to the opening of the market for domestic railway passenger services and the definition of the railway infrastructure governance, the Presidency will encourage progress on the fourth railway package and will promote a policy discussion in order to seek a common position among Member States. The Presidency will negotiate with the European Parliament on the technical pillar of the fourth railway package.

In the field of road transport the Presidency will focus on reinforcing intermodal transport with the aim of reducing energy consumption and CO₂ emissions: it will also continue to work with the European Parliament on the proposal for a revised Directive on the weights and dimensions of commercial vehicles.

Air Transport

The Presidency intends to encourage negotiations on the proposed Regulations (Single European Sky 2+, SES2+), beginning with the recast of the Regulation establishing the general principles for setting up a Single European Sky, with the aim of accelerating the reform of European air traffic control in order to meet the growing traffic demand anticipated in the years to come. Under the same package, the Presidency could also examine the proposal for the review of the Regulation (EC) No 216/2008) modifying the rules governing the European Agency for Aviation Safety (EASA).

As regards negotiation with the European Parliament, the Presidency will endeavour to finalise the negotiations for the adoption of the air passenger rights package. The Presidency will work towards advancing the negotiations with the European Parliament on the relevant Regulations of the Airport package (on the allocation of time slots and ground-handling services).

The Presidency will also promote a policy discussion concerning the Commission's Communication on the opening up of the aviation market to the civilian use of Remotely-Piloted Aircraft Systems in a safe and sustainable manner.

Maritime transport

Considering the increasing relevance of maritime shipping and the maritime commercial routes linking the EU ports to all other major economies, the Presidency attaches the utmost importance to enhancing the role of European ports as logistics terminals as defined in the TEN-T network. Therefore, the Presidency will continue work on the Commission proposal establishing a framework for market access to port services and the financial transparency of ports.

Horizontal Issues

The Presidency will promote a new definition of the TEN-T Project, shifting from single rail and water networks to road networks and ports, inter-ports and airport nodes.

The Presidency will also encourage an in-depth assessment of TEN-T networks, in line with the process already launched at the TEN-T Conference held in Naples in October 2009.

In the field of GNSS satellite systems (Galileo and EGNOS), the Italian Presidency is committed to promoting Public Regulated Services and "Early Services" in commercial sectors, considering that any further delay in the offer of satellite services with respect to competing satellite systems will undermine the prospect of penetrating global markets.

Telecom and Digital

Europe cannot miss the opportunities of the digital revolution. The challenge is not limited to exploiting the high potential of the ICT sector as a source of growth. Europe is urged to ensure the digitalisation of its entire economy and public services across the board, as the key to unlocking the next decade of growth and innovation.

The Italian Presidency, in cooperation with the European Commission, will organise the “Digital Venice” event in July. The event will bring together European political, industrial and innovation leaders to stimulate a high-level debate on the digital economy. In Venice, thematic workshops involving institutions, researchers, students, industry and innovation stakeholders will focus on the following key priority areas: e-skills and jobs; rethinking “digital” to favour economic development; trust and security for digital citizenship; the EU digital service infrastructures, Cloud computing, open and big data value chains and the digitalisation of the public sector as a key enabler for EU competitiveness.

The “Venice Declaration” will provide the vision and strategic guidelines for a stronger Digital Agenda for Europe (DAE) in the context of the review of the Europe 2020 strategy.

Transforming the EU into a digital economy means building an architecture based on three infrastructures: regulatory, physical and human.

The creation of a modern and responsive regulatory framework, allowing the removal of the barriers to e-commerce and the completion of the Digital Single Market, is a matter of absolute priority. As the telecoms market is the cornerstone of the digital market, the Italian Presidency will strive to facilitate an agreement in the Council and finalise the subsequent negotiations with the European Parliament.

Digital trust is an essential pre-condition for the functioning of the single market. Therefore, the Presidency will also accelerate the negotiations on Network Infrastructure Security (NIS).

The Italian Presidency will work to stimulate progress in the discussion on the Web accessibility Directive.

To move towards a real digital economy, the EU needs to tackle its infrastructure and networks gap. The Italian Presidency intends to steer a debate on the creation of a stable and transparent regulatory environment for the required investments, also promoting a discussion on how to support the process, making the best possible use of available Structural Funds, EIB initiatives and programmes such as Horizon 2020.

The third pillar is human infrastructure. The Italian Presidency will strive to support the “Grand Coalition for digital jobs” at EU level, inter alia in the context of the ongoing initiatives for youth employment, and will stimulate a debate on the integration of digital skills in education from the earliest stages of school.

In the light of the essential role played by public administration in the digital economy, the Presidency will encourage a reflection on policy coordination in digital public procurement, as a lever for significant cost savings and in order to stimulate investments by EU companies.

The Italian Presidency will promote the development of cross-border Digital Public Services, and in particular the creation of European interoperable platforms such as a common framework for citizens' electronic identity management. Moving towards an “EU citizens e-Identity” will represent a flagship project.

A coordinated approach to “Cloud computing”, “Big Data” and “Open Data” technologies will be encouraged, with a view to modernising the public sector, reducing its costs and promoting the global competitiveness of EU digital companies. The Presidency will encourage the further development of the “EU Cloud Partnership” and of a reinforced network of Digital Champions.

Energy

The Italian Presidency will devote its efforts to four major, closely interlinked pillars of EU energy policy: the framework for climate and energy beyond 2020; EU energy security; the completion of the single energy market; and external energy policy.

In this regard, the Presidency intends to steer constructive debates linked to the proceedings of the TTE-Energy Council, aiming to take stock of the results of policies already adopted, accelerate their effective implementation, where necessary, and facilitate decisions on future actions, also in the context of the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 strategy.

Recognising the key role of the energy sector for stronger and more sustainable economic growth, the Italian Presidency will in all areas promote an approach that takes due account of the impact of the policy on energy prices and industrial competitiveness.

The Italian Presidency aims to facilitate the reaching of an agreement on the new climate and energy framework at the European Council in October. Following the last informal Energy and Environment Councils, the first round of Sherpa meetings and the June European Council, negotiations on the package will continue. The Italian Presidency will favour a constant, active involvement of the EU Council. Discussions on the package will be held at an informal meeting of Ministers of Energy and Environment with the aim of reaching agreement at the European Council in October.

The Italian Presidency will promote a thorough debate on the proposed EU Energy Security Strategy, also taking into account the outcome of the Rome G7 energy ministerial meeting and the G7 Summit in Brussels. Due attention will be paid to short, medium and long-term measures.

The Presidency will steer a debate on the Commission Communication on energy efficiency, on its links with the climate and energy framework and on focusing on harmonising the system for measuring national results. Maximum coherence between the climate/energy framework and the energy security strategy will be ensured. In this vein, the proposed system of governance will be further defined in order to take account of the national specificities in terms of the energy mix and the degree of dependence on fossil fuels, knowing that the discussions on the framework for energy and climate policy up to 2030 will also contribute to a common European vision of the energy mix.

In this context, the completion of the internal energy market by the end of 2014, which has already been encouraged by the European Council, in February 2011 and in May 2013, is an absolute priority. The Italian Presidency will provide a conclusive picture on the basis of the Commission's Communication on the internal energy market.

The Presidency will focus the debate on the state of play of the transposition by all Member States of the third energy package and the full implementation of the second package, and will steer a debate in particular on the promotion of the rapid adoption of network codes for electricity and gas networks, through better cooperation and dialogue amongst TSOs (Transmission System Operators) and by making use of the opportunities provided by the Florence Forum and the Madrid Forum.

In the light of the new targets proposed by the Commission on interconnections in the energy security strategy, the Italian Presidency will promote a debate on the realisation of new interconnection capacities towards the less interconnected European regions and of new reverse flow capacities and the development of coordinated regional emergency plans, also with the aim of improving the diversification of gas supply routes and ensuring energy security in normal and emergency situations. The Presidency will ensure the monitoring of the effective implementation of the new Regulation (EU) No 347/2013 on trans-European energy infrastructures and see to it that the Projects of Common Interest (PCI), in both the gas and the electricity sectors, have access to real advantages in terms of financing, authorisations and regulatory treatment in due course. Within this framework, it will also be useful to evaluate other projects not included in the list of PCIs which could improve energy security.

The Presidency will also ensure an early debate on the Commission's Communication on the retail market.

The Council conclusions on the internal energy market are expected to underline the further steps needed in order to improve market liquidity, including the development of "market coupling", with a view to levelling European energy prices. In this regard, the Presidency recalls both the new guidelines on State aid in the field of energy and the environment and the Commission's Communication on delivering the internal electricity market and making the most of public intervention.

Regarding the external dimension of the European energy policy, the Presidency considers that the EU's first priority is to ensure an increased security of energy supply to all Member States through a better diversification of sources and routes, to be pursued by preserving and further developing strong and stable relations with interested supplier and transit countries, and also to facilitate the realisation of selected important infrastructures of common interest.

Based on the discussion on the energy security strategy, the Presidency will promote the debate among Member States, at both technical and political level, on the future steps to be taken in order to reduce external energy dependence.

The Presidency also intends to focus attention on Euro-Mediterranean relations. In this regard, the Presidency will organise an event focusing on the development of interconnection projects, on the exploitation of hydrocarbons in North African countries (Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Libya) and in the South-Eastern Mediterranean (Cyprus and Israel), and on the safety of offshore hydrocarbon prospection, exploration and production activities.

The Italian Presidency will continue to foster the opening of the Southern Gas Corridor as a route for the supply of gas from the Caspian area and other sources of supply and the better utilisation of regasification terminals in order to take advantage of the development of the international LNG market that is expected to become more liquid and globalised in the medium term.

In 2012, the European Commission and 21 Member States with an oil refinery present in their territories launched an intense debate on the future of the European refining industry.

The Presidency will follow this with a presentation of a “Fitness Check” of EU legislation in the refining sector, which started as part of the European Commission's Smart Regulation strategy.

The Presidency will ensure continued attention by policy makers in both the energy and industrial sectors on the future of the refining industry. Therefore, taking into account the results of the fitness check, the Presidency will promote the adoption of the measures proposed through the continuation of the EU Refining Forum and encourage stronger coordination between energy experts and industrial policy experts.

The Italian Presidency will try to advance and possibly finalise the Directive amending Directive 98/70/EC relating to the quality of petrol and diesel fuels and amending Directive 2009/28/EC on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources (the “ILUC Directive”), submitted on 18 October 2012.

H. Agriculture and Fisheries

The Italian Presidency will strive to promote a more sustainable, innovative and environmentally friendly development of the agriculture, food and fisheries sector in the European Union, ensuring coherence with Expo Milano 2015, devoted to “Feeding the planet, energy for life”.

Agriculture

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has just undergone significant reforms.

The Presidency intends to verify the suitability of the instruments targeted at ensuring income support for farmers by monitoring any progression and, if necessary, urging the Commission to take corrective action.

Special emphasis will be placed on organic farming. The Italian Presidency will give special priority to the proposed review of the base regulation in this sector, with particular attention being paid to the rules on control, import and fraud repression in the field. All actions relating to the simplification of the procedures and the safeguarding of the quality of organic production on the market will be regarded as key issues.

In addition, the agricultural sector will contribute to the reflection on the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy following the Commission Communication taking stock of the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The debate will be focused in particular on the new perspectives for young people in this sector, inter alia in order to combat unemployment.

The Italian Presidency also intends to pursue discussions on the Commission proposal on the school fruit and milk scheme, as well as on the Commission proposals on zootechnical legislation.

After the presentation of the Commission’s report on the future of the dairy market sector following the end of quotas, it will also be possible to widen the debate on the issue.

The Presidency intends to conclude the formalities concerning the approving of the proposal for a regulation on information provision and promotion measures for agricultural products on the internal market and in third countries

The Italian Presidency will try to finalise the dossiers still pending relating to the definition of CAP reforms, namely those on “Delegated Acts” for direct payments and for “the authorisation scheme for vine plantation”.

Finally the Presidency will ensure the Lisbon alignment of Regulations and Acts referring to aromatised wines, spirits and tariff quotas for meat imports.

2. Fisheries

The Presidency intends to actively monitor the start-up phase of the new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and the entry into force of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). In this regard, the Presidency will urge the timely and effective implementation of the new regulatory frameworks, and will ensure the sustainable development of the sector, taking into account the environmental, economic and social aspects.

Particular attention will also be paid to aquaculture in view of the increase in production in the EU, enhancing the competitiveness-related factors represented by respect for the environment and ecosystems, food safety and quality. The Presidency intends to promote consumer information.

The Presidency will focus on reaching agreements on fishing opportunities in 2015 in inland and international waters (TACs and quotas: General Regulation, Baltic Sea, Black Sea, Deep-sea species), which will have to be fully consistent with the objectives of the new Common Fisheries Policy. Stocks will be exploited according to the criterion of maximum sustainable yield (MSY), taking into account the data available and the opinions expressed by scientists.

A special effort will be deployed by the Presidency for the purposes of representing and coordinating the Union's position in the negotiations on fisheries partnership agreements with third

countries and in meetings planned within multilateral organisations and with the coastal States in the fisheries sector.

In particular, the Presidency will update and simplify the procedures defined in the existing long-term recovery plan if new scientific evidence relating to stocks of Bluefin tuna becomes available. Finally, in the light of unsatisfactory data regarding stocks in the Mediterranean Sea, the Presidency will seek to promote the regional procedures allowed by the new CFP - inter alia through the adoption of management plans - in order to ensure shared measures by the Member States concerned, as well as the action of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) with a view to the introduction of appropriate resources management measures, also shared by any third countries concerned.

The Presidency envisages undertaking an in-depth assessment, together with possible proposals or amendments, of the achievements Regulation (EC) No 1967/2006 concerning management measures and techniques for sustainable fishing in the Mediterranean Sea, to be carried out on a regional basis as well.

Veterinary, Food Safety and Phytosanitary Issues

Among the strategic priorities to be pursued during the six-month Presidency, legislative harmonisation on animal health represents an important issue, also with reference to the impact on farmers of bio-security measures to prevent the spread of diseases. The Italian Presidency intends to make progress in achieving consensus on EU legislation which would effectively address consumers' health and animal welfare concerns. The new proposal tabled by the Commission at the end of 2013 on animal cloning and novel food may present a new start for finding a balanced solution preventing the marketing of food from animal clones, while avoiding any obstacles to research and innovation.

The Presidency will work on the proposal for an EU Regulation on animal health. Reinforcement of the epidemiological surveillance system for certain diseases such as Avian Influenza, Blue Tongue and West Nile Disease will be proposed. In particular, a global conference will be held in Italy, in agreement with the European Commission and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

Furthermore, in accordance with EU recommendations and the public health problems raised by consumers and patients, the Presidency will encourage the review of Regulations on veterinary medicines as well as on the use of medicated feeds in farm animal therapy, inter alia in order to achieve a reduction in the use of antibiotics in products of animal origin.

As regards food safety, the review of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 on official controls is already in progress through the proposal for Regulation (EU) No 256/2013. This measure is part of a package aiming to achieve a legislative update of health and safety throughout the agro-food chain. In addition, the Presidency will be involved in the review of the Regulations on protection against harmful organisms for plants; the production and marketing of plant propagation material; and official controls and other official activities intended to ensure the application of laws on plant health and phytosanitary production.

Moreover, the Italian Presidency will be committed to reaching an agreement with the European Parliament within the negotiations on the Novel Food file.

An additional strategic priority is the reinforcement of cooperation between Member States' competent authorities in the fight against fraud.

The Italian Presidency, in cooperation with the Commission, will examine whether the current legislation concerning both food supplements based on plants and plant derivatives - "botanicals" - and probiotic products needs to be reviewed, with particular reference to removing the gaps in the application of the legislative framework for claims, which represents a relevant area of interest for the food production sector at national level.

A priority objective of the Presidency will be to strengthen EU negotiations with the most relevant third countries in order to ensure greater compliance with the international health standards laid down by the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement (SPS) and to promote the export of agro-food products.

4. Forests

The Presidency will address the Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe(L.B.A.),the implementation of the new EU Forestry Strategy and the launch of EU coordination for the preparation of Council conclusions for UNFF 11 (the 11th session of the United Nations Forum on Forests), to be held in 2015.

I. Environment

Inclusive and environmentally sustainable growth creates greater opportunities for all, reduces inequalities and fosters social development. On this basis, and taking into account the 7th Environment Action Programme, the Italian Presidency will aim at effectively promoting a steady transition of the European Union towards an inclusive and environmentally sustainable economy, as a means of stimulating a greener and more competitive economy, with structural changes in terms of the use and recovery of natural resources.

A Resource-Efficient Europe

Increasing resource efficiency can open up significant economic opportunities for future growth and job creation, as it can lead to improved productivity, lower costs, greater competitiveness and innovation while reducing the environmental impact. In this context, and bearing in mind the Commission Communication on the circular economy, the Italian Presidency will promote a discussion on the advantages of policies concerning the circular economy and resource efficiency, with the aim of conveying a strong political message as to the benefits of “green” policies for growth and job creation. To this end, the Presidency will also look closely at the Commission Communication on Sustainable Food with a particular focus on the social, economic, environmental and health aspects, at both global and local level. Consideration will be given to promoting sustainable food systems, which are respectful of the ecosystem and natural cycles, in particular by looking at food supply chains, and addressing the issues of better price transparency and financial speculation on food commodities, as well as the need to reduce food waste.

With regard to the expected review of the waste legislation, the Presidency will start working on the new legislative proposals with the aim of strengthening waste prevention and boosting materials recycling in accordance with the provisions of the 7th Environment Action Programme and the Roadmap for Resource Efficiency.

Great attention will be given to the “Clean Air” package. The Presidency will follow up on the negotiations relating to the two relevant legislative proposals: the National Emission Ceilings Directive and the Medium Combustion Plants Directive, advancing the work as far as possible in order to create a framework for further reducing air pollution at source and setting limits in order to control the negative effects of air pollution and protect human health and the environment from greater risks.

The Presidency will make progress on the discussions on the Regulation concerning the reduction of pollutant emissions from road vehicles.

Finally, the Presidency will seek an agreement on plastic bags.

Particular attention will be given to continuing work on the compromise proposal on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) for a Directive amending Directive 2001/18/EC with a view to concluding a second-reading agreement with the Parliament in order to define a legislative framework allowing Member States to restrict or prohibit the cultivation of a specific GMO either throughout or in certain parts of their territory.

2030 policy framework for climate and energy

A robust EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) can be a driver factor for low carbon investments, a primary tool for delivering cost-effective reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and a centrepiece for the future of the carbon markets as a whole.

The Presidency considers the Commission’s proposal on the ETS reform, establishing a market stability reserve, to be of critical importance and will follow up on the work carried out by the Greek Presidency with a view to finalising an agreement on the proposed decision.

The steps the EU takes today will be critical for delivering cost-effective decarbonisation to reduce greenhouse gases, while taking into account industrial competitiveness and maximising the economic benefits, including innovation, growth and jobs. The Presidency will actively involve the Council in supporting and facilitating the early development of the 2030 framework for the EU's climate change and energy policy, which is needed in order to ensure the continuity of the EU's climate and energy policies as well as to provide the necessary degree of stability and predictability

for the economic operators. In this context, renewable energy sources (both traditional and innovative) and energy efficiency will continue to be crucial in terms of placing our economies on a low-carbon trajectory, and thus will remain a focus for EU action. The Presidency will continue to work on the 2030 framework with a view to reaching an agreement at the European Council in October.

The Presidency will continue to work on the Regulation on the monitoring, reporting and verification of carbon dioxide emissions from maritime transport, with a view to finalising it, as it represents a building block for the 2030 policy framework for climate and energy.

Greening the European Semester

Three years after the start of the "European semester", the integration of environmental priorities and resource efficiency in this cycle of economic and fiscal policy coordination continues to present a considerable challenge: the integration of environmental priorities could boost growth and employment opportunities and contribute to the promotion of an environmentally sustainable, resource-efficient and low-carbon economy ("green economy").

The Italian Presidency will promote a debate on "green growth" and "job creation" through the organisation of an Informal Joint Council meeting of Environment and Employment Ministers. The discussion will be based on the Commission Communication on green jobs, which stresses the challenges of bridging the skills gap, anticipating change and supporting job creation adjustments.

In this context, taking into account discussions at the informal Council and building on the various communications on the “*green economy*” already mentioned, the Presidency will work towards the greening of the “European Semester” by ensuring that Environment Ministers provide a timely and appropriate input into the process contributing to the preparation of the 2015 Annual Growth Survey and the review of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

The Italian Presidency will encourage a greater focus on the opportunities for a transition to a green and low-carbon economy in the context of sustainable development and the positive effects in terms of job opportunities, improved resource efficiency, equity and quality of life.

International Environment Agenda

The Presidency will ensure that the EU continues to play an active role in the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC), with a view to the 20th UNFCCC Conference of Parties (Lima, Peru, December 2014) which is a milestone towards a possible global climate agreement in 2015. Furthermore, the Presidency will take the opportunity provided by the Climate Summit convened in September 2014 by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon to take stock of progress and generate further high-level momentum towards such goals. Finally, the Presidency will make every effort to complete the process of ratifying the Doha amendment to the Kyoto Protocol.

The second half of 2014 will be crucial in terms of achieving significant improvements in global processes on the issues of protection, conservation and valorisation of biodiversity with ecosystem services. The parties to several major biodiversity-related Multilateral Environmental Agreements will be holding their Conferences of the Parties, including the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 12), the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP-MOP 7), the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (COP11) and the Standing Committee of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The Presidency will ensure that EU representation is coordinated in all these meetings.

Important steps will be taken in terms of preparing for the “post-2015 Agenda” and the follow-up to the Rio+20 Conference. The Presidency will coordinate the EU's participation in the negotiation processes on the post-2015 agenda and on sustainable development goals, also taking into account the work of the UN Statistical Commission on indicators and “beyond GDP”.

The establishment of the “High-level political forum on sustainable development” was a crucial outcome of the Rio+20 Conference. The Forum will hold its second meeting in July 2014, which will result in a negotiated declaration. The Presidency will ensure cooperation between the Environment Council and Development Council on all dossiers relating to the outcome of the Rio +20 Conference and the post-2015 Agenda.

The Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) will be held from 1 to 4 September 2014 in Apia, Samoa. The EU has always supported SIDS in their efforts to face important challenges such as the management of waste and chemicals, climate adaptation and Sustainable Consumption and Production. The Presidency will work to enhance actions particularly on capacity-building, technology transfer and financial resource mobilisation.

The Presidency will ensure the necessary coordination at the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (10- 12 November 2014, Aichi-Nagoya).

The EU has recently adopted its new EU Fluorinated gas legislation introducing more advanced restrictions on HFC gases. As part of the EU's efforts to address the effects of climate change, the Presidency will continue to support the proposed HFC amendments under the Montreal Protocol in order to phase down these potent greenhouse gases. In this context, the Presidency will ensure that the European Union acts to replenish the Multilateral Fund aimed at helping developing countries to comply with their obligations to phase out the use of ozone-depleting substances (ODS).

On the occasion of the 6th meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee of the Minamata Convention (INC6) in November and the 2nd meeting of the Open-ended working group within the framework of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), the Presidency is ready to work towards the renewal of the commitment undertaken by the EU to use and produce chemicals in ways that will lead to the minimisation of significant adverse effects on human health and environment by 2020.

The Presidency will play a coordinating role in representing the EU both before and during at the 8th Conference of the Parties of the UNECE Convention on Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents to be held in Geneva in December and at the Executive Body of the UNECE Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP), with the aim of facilitating the ongoing process to implement their long-term strategy . The Presidency will also coordinate EU work within the framework of October's annual session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy, with reference to the decision to be taken within the next "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference in 2016.

The Presidency will take over EU coordination from the Greek Presidency at the 5th Meeting of the Parties of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters and the MOPP 2 to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers.

The Presidency will ensure EU coordination at the 9th meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (Geneva, September 2014) and will expedite preparations for the Conferences of Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, which will be held jointly in May 2015.

J. Education, Youth, Culture and Sport

Education and Training

With the objective of contributing to the upcoming review of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Presidency intends to propose a political discussion on the future role of education and training in the national and EU growth agendas, highlighting the impact of investment in education on economic sustainable growth and the role of education in fostering competitiveness and job creation. Within this framework, the Presidency will focus on vocational education and training, the inter-relationship between education and employment and entrepreneurship education.

Furthermore, the Presidency will support a discussion on the "role of education in the digital era" by organising, in cooperation with the Commission, an event at ministerial level in Brussels aimed at raising awareness of the potential of digital education, taking stock of the progress made on the EU "Opening up Education" agenda, and drawing attention to the role played by education in the transmission of values and in facilitating an educated and conscious citizenship.

The Presidency also intends to initiate a dialogue on how the new Erasmus Plus Program could be better used in order to enhance international cooperation among higher education institutions and further promote student mobility programmes.

The Presidency intends to propose the following subjects for future discussion: wellbeing at school and early childhood education in foreign languages.

Recognising that doctoral education and training can play a role in fostering innovation, self-entrepreneurship and the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, the Presidency plans to organise an event to re-launch the Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training, with a view to strengthening the international dimension of European doctoral education, in line with the recommendations of the Bologna Ministerial Conference held in Bucharest.

The Presidency will act in favour of third-sector organisations involved in programmes of learning support, school drop-out prevention and broadening access to higher technical and academic education, all of which contribute to achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Youth

Within the framework of the open method of coordination (2010-2018), and taking into consideration the EU Work Plan for Youth adopted by the Council in May 2014, the Italian Presidency will promote young people's access to rights in order to foster their autonomy and social participation.

Youth employment is able to reach the most socially disadvantaged individuals and those that are not in formal education and training. In addition to employability, youth employment plays a key role in ensuring social cohesion in communities under pressure due to high levels of unemployment. Enhanced cross-sectorial cooperation should further advance the contribution made by the youth sector to achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Special attention will be given to enhancing the link between youth rights and active citizenship, by improving knowledge of rights, the identification of means of participation and the promotion of generational and inter-generational dialogue.

The Italian Presidency will support further progress on work concerning the mutual recognition of civil service systems, by reducing the barriers to cross-border mobility and by favouring a more systematic and results-oriented exchange of best practices. This process should also pave the way towards developing a joint civil service scheme in Europe.

Furthermore, the Presidency will support consultations with young people within the framework of the structured dialogue carried out in the context of the European Steering Committee.

1. Cultural and Audio-visual Affairs

The aim of the Presidency will be to bring culture and heritage to the forefront of the European Strategy. The Presidency will focus on the transversal value of culture and creativity in all relevant EU policies and will underpin the importance of cultural cooperation and intercultural dialogue in addressing social challenges and in establishing successful external relations.

In particular, the cross-cutting nature of cultural heritage and its potential for synergies with other policy fields will be explored. The specific contribution which cultural heritage can make to the achievement of the objectives of the EU 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth will be investigated further, with a view to its inclusion in the Strategy's review process. In this regard, the Council will work towards an agreement on conclusions highlighting the potential of heritage for the Europe 2020 Strategy.

The Presidency will foster the endorsement of the contribution of cultural policies to long-term sustainable development and social cohesion and the integration of immigrant communities, as well as drivers for innovation and the creation of social capital.

Council discussions concerning the value of cultural heritage for society and its role as a spillover for the creative sector will therefore be promoted. In particular, the role played by cultural heritage in terms of the identity of cities, territories and communities and as a strategic element for their attractiveness and competitiveness at global level will be brought to the fore.

The Presidency will stimulate debate on new models of governance models, both multi-level and multi-stakeholder, integrating competences at local, regional, national and EU levels, recognising the contribution made by private stakeholders and civil society and allowing citizens to actively participate.

The Presidency will work towards completing discussions on the adoption of the Council's new Work Plan for Culture 2015/2018.

The increasing use of the Internet and mobile devices provides plenty of opportunities as well as new and challenging scenarios. A special focus will be placed on the European Regulation in the audiovisual sector, including the use of online creative content in the digital single market, which is closely linked to the development of intellectual property rights rules in this area. Strengthening and supporting diversity, creativity and the advancement of Europe's film industry will also feature among the Presidency's goals in this area.

The Presidency will continue supporting the development of Europeana and promoting the use of digital technologies as means of enhancing access to and participation in the European cultural heritage.

The re-use of cultural content will be further explored as means for education and tourism, for increasing audiences and for facilitating the development of a stronger creative economy. Special emphasis will be placed on encouraging youth employment and entrepreneurship in the cultural and creative sector, in order to support the building of human capital and collective well-being.

The Presidency will continue to support measures aimed at the mobility of collections and artists across Europe and at improving procedures to combat the illicit trafficking of works of art.

The Presidency will further pursue a harmonised and integrated approach in the field of research, promoting the development of infrastructure on tangible, intangible and digital heritage, in line with the vision of the Joint Programming Initiatives on Cultural Heritage and Global Change.

Special attention will be given to developing data collection in the cultural sector and analysing its spill-over effects, as tools for evidence-based cultural policies. The focus will not be limited to the economy and the employment rate, but will be extended to social aspects such as social well-being and integration.

4.Sport

The Italian Presidency accords a great deal of importance to the promotion of the sports culture and social inclusion, and healthy physical activity across sectors, especially in terms of extracurricular activities in schools, as well as strengthening the fight against illegal practices in sport.

The Presidency will focus on enhancing the integrity of sport through the development of actions relating to the fight against the manipulation of sports results and the phenomena of illegality, violence and discrimination in sport.

Special attention will be paid to the economic dimension of sport as a factor for innovation, by exploiting synergies between sport, research, university and enterprise, for the purpose of economic growth and the creation of new jobs, especially for young people, in line with the objectives of the EU 2020 Strategy.

Finally, the Presidency will emphasise the need for health protection through sports activities, with particular regard to young people of school age and efforts to counter sedentary lifestyles and child obesity.