



**FRENCH PRESIDENCY
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

WORK PROGRAMME

1 July – 31 December 2008

***EUROPE TAKING ACTION
TO MEET TODAY'S CHALLENGES***

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INTRODUCTION

The European Union has to respond to the many challenges, which confront it. These challenges –climate change, ecology, migration, food and health, as well as economic and financial matters – are the key issues of globalisation today. They are at the heart of the concerns of European citizens who expect a collective response.

The European Union has the ambition and the assets needed to meet these expectations. It is bolstered by the values that have inspired the European project from the outset and which have defined its identity in the world, values that it needs to defend and promote both inside and outside the Union.

The French Presidency has drawn up its programme with the intention of responding to the chief concerns of citizens. In particular, it wishes to address four key priorities: energy and the climate, migration issues, agriculture, and security and defence. Looking beyond these four leading policy issues, it naturally aims to make progress in all the major areas of EU action – economic, financial, social and cultural – and on the international stage.

The detailed plans for the French Presidency are presented in the programme set out below.

These plans represent a continuation of the work carried out under the Slovene Presidency and within the wider context of the programme agreed with the forthcoming Czech and Swedish Presidencies. These plans also take account of the work programme of the European Commission for 2008. They have been the subject of close consultation with the European Parliament.

With regard to the Lisbon Treaty, the French Presidency proposes to implement the conclusions of the European Council of 19 and 20 June 2008: the European Council will return to this matter at its meeting on 15 October 2008 with a view to determining the way forward. In the interim, it is important to continue to obtain concrete findings in the various areas that are of interest to citizens.

1. MAKING EUROPE A MODEL OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL, ECOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The renewed Lisbon strategy for growth and employment constitutes the favoured response of the European Union and its Member States to the challenges of globalisation. This is the context in which the French Presidency intends to promote and support a European model of sustainable social, ecological and economic development.

In doing so, the Presidency will act in accordance with the priorities defined by the European Council that:

- set the priorities for the three-year cycle from 2008-2010. In particular, it confirmed the validity of the integrated guidelines in line with which the Member States will present their new national reform programmes in October 2008 to be reviewed, as appropriate, by the competent bodies of the Council;
- invited Member States to implement the ten objectives defined in the Community Lisbon Programme. The Presidency will commit to this where applicable;
- invited the European Union to continue its efforts to mould globalisation by strengthening the external dimension of the renewed Lisbon strategy;
- reaffirmed the importance of the social dimension of the European Union, which is an integral part of the Lisbon strategy. This is the context in which the French Presidency will conduct its review of the updated social agenda;
- invited Member States to start to consider the future of the Lisbon strategy beyond 2010. The Presidency will launch the initial discussions, particularly within the group of national coordinators of the Lisbon strategy. It will act in close conjunction with the Commission and its partners in the trio of Presidencies.

1.1. Europe and the challenge of sustainable resources

➤ Placing Europe in the vanguard of the fight against climate change

The Presidency will commit itself, in accordance with the mandate from the European Council of March 2008, to drawing up an agreement by the end of the year on the proposals contained in the “climate/energy” package, which constitute a sound basis for an ambitious European policy to combat climate change and the transition of the European economy to an economy using the minimum of carbon.

The four proposals in this package (an amendment of the ETS Directive, a decision on the division of effort among the Member States, a Framework Directive on renewable energy sources, and a Directive on the geological storage of carbon dioxide) should allow us to define and implement effectively the ambitious commitments entered into as part of the integrated policy on climate and energy. They relate in particular to the three key objectives defined by the European Council in March 2007:

- to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20% by 2020 – or by 30% if international negotiations on a comprehensive global agreement for the period after 2012 should meet with success;
- to increase the proportion of renewable energy sources within the energy consumption of the European Union to 20% by 2020;
- to improve energy efficiency by 20% by 2020.

Reaching an agreement by the end of 2008 on the “climate/energy” package addresses a crucial issue for the European Union namely that of reinforcing its driving role and credibility in international negotiations on climate change. Building on the momentum created in Bali, in December 2009 the European Union will steer discussions in the Copenhagen Conference on climate change post 2012 to promote an ambitious comprehensive and global agreement on climate change, which meets the aim of limiting the rise in the average global temperature to a maximum of 2°C above pre-industrial levels by 2050. The Poznań Conference in December 2008 will represent an important stage during which real negotiations must be initiated in order to put in place the necessary conditions for the success of negotiations in Copenhagen in 2009.

To carry the rest of the world along with it, the European agreement needs to be ambitious. The French Presidency will ensure that the necessary financial initiatives are taken for developing countries to adopt low emission technologies that enable economic growth. Finally, the European Union needs to provide itself with credible means to dissuade some third countries from standing on the sidelines of the worldwide movement to combat global warming.

The Presidency will begin discussions both on the “climate/energy” package and on the preparations for international meetings during informal meetings of Ministers of the Environment and Energy to be held from 3 to 5 July in Paris.

The Presidency will also seek an agreement with the European Parliament on the proposed regulation on emissions of CO₂ from light vehicles and will seek to conclude its negotiations with the European Parliament on the inclusion of the aviation industry in the greenhouse gas emission allowance trading scheme.

➤ ***Reinforcing our energy security***

European energy policy has three objectives: to contribute to the fight against global warming; to safeguard the competitiveness of European economies and the availability of affordable energy; and to increase security of supply within the Union. In order for European energy policy to become a reality, European energy security and diplomacy need to be enhanced and extended.

In this light, the Presidency intends to promote efforts to reinforce energy security, both internally (energy efficiency, establishment of a common and unified energy area, diversity of energy sources) and externally (definition of real energy partnerships with the major energy-producing, consuming and transit countries). Reflection on these matters will be linked to the second strategic report expected from the Commission in the autumn of 2008.

Within the EU, in accordance with the aim of making 20% savings in energy by 2020, the Presidency proposes to stress improvements in energy efficiency in various areas such as electrical appliances on standby, light bulbs and the energy performance of buildings. The Presidency also seeks to make Europe a unified energy area, by:

- identifying the energy needs of tomorrow’s European Union and using these to collectively deduce the necessary investments;
- establishing all the conditions to ensure that trade in energy between countries is as fluid as possible, especially by way of interconnections and cooperation between networks;
- working together to anticipate and forestall energy supply crises by means of greater transparency, particularly in relation to stocks of oil and gas, by establishing emergency plans in each Member State and defining the necessary crisis management arrangements at the Community level.

With respect to third parties, the summits scheduled during the six months of the Presidency will enable us to inaugurate a close dialogue with a number of energy-producing, consuming and transit countries (Russia, Ukraine, China and India), and also with regional groupings (Central Asia, the Baku Process, the Energy Charter, the Mediterranean) and OPEC, to promote cooperation in the fields of energy and the fight against climate change.

The Presidency will undertake to act on the compromise arrived at by the Council on the proposals in the package on the “internal gas and electricity market” and to use this as a basis for efforts to draw up an agreement with the European Parliament.

➤ ***Mitigating the effects of energy price increases***

The European macroeconomic environment is characterised today by the sharp increase in the costs of energy, particularly oil. This has both social and economic effects.

Following the meeting of the European Council on 19 and 20 June, the French Presidency, in collaboration with the European Commission, will examine the feasibility and the impact of measures aimed at limiting the effects of the surge in oil and gas prices and will report to the European Council before its meeting in October.

This development also highlights the need to move quickly to adopt the package on climate change and energy, many elements of which may help to improve the situation. It is essential to continue efforts to increase energy efficiency and save energy and to diversify the sources of supply to the European Union.

➤ ***Implementing a transport policy in the interests of sustainable development***

Sustainable transport

In keeping with the priorities set by the European Council, the Presidency intends to promote a transport policy taking full account of sustainable development. A review of various proposals will contribute to this, including an amendment to Directive 1999/62/EC on the charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures (the “Euro toll disc” scheme), the use of new technologies in transport (Galileo, SESAR), the action plan on urban mobility; the establishment of the internal market for transport.

Safe transport

The Presidency will also strive to make progress in the initiatives aimed at increasing transport safety: maritime safety (the Erika III package), air safety (the second “Single European Sky” package), and road safety.

On this last point in particular, it will seek an agreement on the draft directive aimed at facilitating the cross-border prosecution of traffic offences, which jeopardise safety on the roads. This proposal is of great symbolic and practical importance because it will make a significant contribution to improving safety on Europe’s roads, by penalising the offences that are the cause of three-quarters of road accidents (speeding, drink-driving, not wearing a seat belt and failing to stop at a red light).

➤ ***Protecting the environment***

Along with the fight against climate change, the prevention of pollution and the associated risks will be a major concern of the Presidency. The Presidency will continue or instigate reviews of a number of documents such as integrated pollution prevention and control (IPPC), standards on emissions from heavy duty vehicles (Euro VI), quality of fuels, electrical and electronic waste and communication on the dismantling of ships.

In close collaboration with the Commission, the Presidency will organise a continued debate on genetically modified organisms (GMOs), particularly with regard to enhancing evaluation at the European level.

The French Presidency will support the work on the action plan on sustainable consumption and production.

The Presidency will manage European coordination within the dedicated international bodies, particularly those of the United Nations. In particular, it will follow the progress of the debate on international governance of the environment in the United Nations General Assembly, along with international negotiations on biodiversity.

➤ ***Preparing the Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy for the challenges of tomorrow***

In continuation of the efforts initiated by the Slovene Presidency and based on the priorities defined by the conclusions of the Council (on Agriculture) on 17 March 2008, the Presidency will review the legislative proposals on the assessment of the Common Agricultural Policy, with the aim of adopting new provisions by the end of 2008. To do this, it will work closely with the European Parliament.

In parallel, the Presidency will propose to its partners that they take a broader view of the issues and the objectives that European agriculture and agricultural policy will have to meet in the future. Agriculture is at the heart of the issues confronting our society, and the sector currently faces many challenges, including ensuring the food security and safety of European consumers based on a regular, accessible supply of food whose quality is guaranteed, helping to achieve balanced global food supplies, combating climate change and improving the environment, and preserving the environmental balance within Europe.

The Presidency will inaugurate this discussion on the occasion of the informal meeting of Ministers of Agriculture to be held at Annecy from 21 to 23 September.

Particular stress will also be placed on the problem of food safety, animal health and the protection of plants. A number of topics will be reviewed, including the progress of efforts on the “pesticides” package, strengthening food safety controls on imports of agricultural and agri-foodstuff products and the reform of animal health policy.

Based on the proposals to be presented by the Commission, the Presidency will strive to make the distribution of fruit and vegetables in schools a reality and to safeguard the future of the European programme of aid to the most deprived groups.

In terms of fisheries policy, in addition to conducting the annual review of the possibilities for fishing, setting the total allowable catch (TAC) and managing fishing activities in 2009, the Presidency will continue or initiate a review of several proposals from the Commission (e.g. regulation on technical measures, regulation on serious infringements, regulation on fishing controls and amendment to the cod recovery plan), with the aim of promoting sustainable and responsible fishing. Emphasis will also be placed on the sustainable development of fish farming. In a general sense, the French Presidency will undertake to make progress on a response at Community level to the crisis affecting the fishing industry based on the proposals expected from the Commission.

The Presidency will also hold discussions with the Commission on ways of managing fish quotas to improve the sustainability of fish stocks.

➤ ***Developing a more coherent maritime policy***

Based on the Blue Book and the action plan from the Commission, and in line with the conclusions of the European Council of December 2007, the Presidency will continue the efforts to define and implement an integrated maritime policy within the European Union. This should enable the European Union to bring greater consistency to the various sectoral activities that it is carrying out in the maritime sphere by incorporating them into an overall vision for the seas and oceans, within the framework of regional approaches.

The Presidency will especially highlight four areas for action: reinforcement of maritime “governance”, particularly by consolidating the group of national high-level focal points; maritime surveillance and the long-term objective of a European maritime surveillance network; the protection of the marine environment; and marine and maritime research.

1.2. European solidarity

➤ ***Developing policies to foster social cohesion***

The Presidency intends to promote the social dimension of European policies and values that characterise the European social model.

Updated social agenda

A review of the European social agenda should enable us to define the social ambitions for Europe over the coming years. In particular, the debate should allow us to broach topics that may be new and which will concern us in the future: demographic change and its impact on the employment market and the situation of senior citizens; globalisation and the position that Europe should adopt towards it; diversity; and the fight against poverty. Thought should also be given to the instruments of European social policy: legislative, financial and contractual instruments, and open methods of coordination. This examination should also aim to reinforce the social dimension of the internal market, which is essential to ensuring the proper functioning of the market and reinforcing the faith that citizens place in it.

These subjects will be addressed at the informal meeting of the Ministers on the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSSCO) Council to be held on 11 and 12 July.

Finally, the French Presidency will initiate a review of the proposals included in the updated social agenda presented by the Commission.

“Flexicurity”, employment, the right to work, and mobility

The French Presidency will work closely with the European Parliament to adopt the compromise reached at the EPSSCO Council meeting on 9 June 2008 on the two Directives on the organisation of working time and on the protection of temporary workers.

By prioritising the issues of geographical and professional mobility and safeguarding career paths by way of training and access to rights, the Presidency will press for the adoption and implementation of the common principles of “flexicurity” by the Member States. To this end, it will draw on the results of the work carried out by the tripartite mission on flexicurity created in February 2008; the mission will present an interim report to the EPSSCO Council on 2 and 3 October, and its final conclusions to the EPSSCO Council on 15 and 16 December.

The Presidency will also promote initiatives aimed at developing geographical mobility. In particular, the Presidency will seek to further negotiations on the Directive on the portability

of supplementary pension rights, a project that is essential to improving the rights of mobile workers in Europe and lending substance to the objective of professional mobility.

A conference on workers' mobility will be held on 11 and 12 September, providing the opportunity to address questions of functional (flexicurity) and geographical (transnational) mobility.

In order to develop social dialogue on a European scale, the Presidency will encourage transnational dialogue, possibly based on proposals from the Commission. The Presidency will also seek an agreement on the proposed amendment of Directive No 94/45/EC of 22 September 1994 on the establishment of a European Works Council or a procedure in Community-scale undertakings and Community-scale groups of undertakings for the purposes of informing and consulting employees. European Works Councils are in fact at the heart of the development of transnational social relationships and are raising growing expectations.

The fight against poverty

The promotion of active inclusion of those on the fringes of the employment market responds to a demand for solidarity, which is at the heart of European values and identity. The Presidency will place particular stress on this subject with the aim of defining common principles, on the basis of a recommendation from the Commission. It will also sponsor innovative social programmes, exchanges of experience and the establishment of European networks of excellence. In this context, a European Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion in Marseille on 15 and 16 October will be held to focus specifically on the issue of active inclusion. This will be followed by a meeting of Ministers on 16 October.

The fight against discrimination

Building on the European Year of Equal Opportunities in 2007, the French Presidency aims to ensure progress on the fight against discrimination in Europe. It will foster negotiation and agreement on the proposal expected from the Commission as part of the updated social agenda.

A summit on equal opportunities will be held in Paris on 29 and 30 September.

Equality between men and women

Efforts are still needed to advance equality between men and women, particularly to improve the quality of employment for women, to close the enduring gaps in pay and to facilitate a balance between professional and family life.

In this context, the French Presidency will support the initiatives to be taken by the Commission to amend Directive 92/85 of 19 October 1992 on maternity leave, Directive 96/34 of 3 June 1996 on parental leave, and Directive 86/613 on equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity, including agriculture, in a self-employed capacity.

A conference and a meeting of Ministers will be organised on the subject of professional equality between men and women on 13 and 14 November.

The Presidency will also support initiatives aimed at promoting full recognition of the rights of women in Europe.

Health

The Presidency wishes to place greater emphasis on three major themes:

- Alzheimer's disease: the Presidency will promote better care for sufferers and their families, based on three strands of action namely, health, solidarity and research. This will entail fostering the exchange and sharing of national experience and, where applicable, cooperation on a subject that affects all Member States because of their ageing populations. A major European conference will be dedicated to this on 30-31 October in Paris;
- strengthening food security and safety in Europe: in light of the experience gained in preparing for a global influenza pandemic, and in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, we must look into ways of improving coordination of the management of large-scale safety risks within the European Union. This topic will be specifically addressed at the informal meeting of EU Health Ministers scheduled for 8-9 September at Angers;
- EU health strategy serving the needs of patients: the French Presidency will further work on the proposal expected from the Commission.

Services of general economic interest and social services of general interest

Services of general economic interest and social services of general interest play an essential role in fostering the social and territorial cohesion of the Union.

The French Presidency will therefore support discussions on the legal underpinning of services of general economic interest to ensure that the specific nature of their objectives and their defining characteristics are taken into account in sectoral approaches. A European forum on services of general economic interest will be held on 29 and 30 October.

➤ A renewed ambition for the policy of cohesion

The French Presidency will foster debate on the policy of cohesion, continuing the work already done, particularly at the informal meeting in the Azore Islands (November 2007) and the conference on the future of cohesion policy (April 2008).

The French Presidency will also follow up the territorial agenda of the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities. To this end, it will propose a number of actions, including the adoption of a "sustainable city reference", based on the technical criteria and operational indicators that characterise the sustainable city.

The French Presidency will continue the discussions initiated on the basis of the communication on the *Strategy for the Outermost Regions: Achievements and Future Prospects* and the conclusions expected from the public consultation. Indeed, we must develop the assets of these regions and the role that they can play in the European Union, for example in relation to biodiversity, maritime policy or the management of climate change.

The Presidency also undertakes to further discussions on future relations with the Overseas Countries and Territories.

1.3. An innovative and competitive Europe

➤ *A Europe of knowledge and mobility*

Education, training and innovation constitute the pillars of the knowledge-based society upon which Europe needs to base its investment and develop its value-added. They make a major contribution to the efforts being made to improve growth, employment, competitiveness and social cohesion in Europe and hence form an integral part of the Lisbon strategy. Equally, they play a fundamental role in fostering the inclusion of young people and helping workers to adapt to increasingly complex societies and economies.

These objectives are addressed in the Community context by way of strengthening the role of education and training within the Lisbon strategy, implementing strategies in the Member States for life-long education and training, promoting innovation and creativity to contribute to the development of the triangle of knowledge (education, innovation, research), and by reinforcing European systems of education and vocational training, higher education and research which are essential to maintain the attractiveness of European education systems in the world.

The creation of a knowledge and mobility area also involves strengthening ties between European citizens, by way of apprenticeships, and learning and using multiple languages. The French Presidency will therefore give special attention to linguistic diversity.

Promoting mobility of students and trainees

Ensuring quality higher education throughout Europe is a topic that the French Presidency wishes to stress in order to foster exchanges of students, teachers and researchers. To this end, it will work to finalise the decision on the "Erasmus Mundus" programme for 2009-2013. A conference will be held in September in Strasbourg during which the topic of quality assurance will be addressed specifically.

The French Presidency will give particular attention to the mobility of trainees. Ways of improving trainee mobility will be examined at a European conference on initial training for young people in alternance training and the Europeanisation of careers in November 2008 as part of the Paris Education Fair.

Accelerating the construction of a true European research area

Accelerating the construction of the European research area and making it more effective will be major objectives of the French Presidency, forming part of the "Ljubljana Process" launched by the Slovene Presidency.

The French Presidency aims to use this to reach conclusions on the joint programme strategy, the mobility of researchers and a strategy for international cooperation in the European research area. It intends to reach an agreement on the legal framework for a new pan-European research infrastructure. On the issue of major research infrastructures, it will also undertake to bring about a shared strategic vision.

The French Presidency will also launch activities aimed at defining a "vision for 2020" for the European research area. In this context, ministerial debates will be held on the main challenges confronting European research, in order to define the position to be taken on priority issues such as energy and climate change, food and agronomy, health and ageing, and the information society.

Developing the achievements of the Copenhagen Process with regard to vocational education and training

Consultation on the European Credit for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) was conducted in the European countries participating in the Copenhagen Process. The Commission presented a draft recommendation on this topic, along with a draft recommendation on quality assurance in vocational training. The French Presidency aims to reach a decision on these two recommendations.

The informal meeting of Ministers in November 2008 in Bordeaux will provide an opportunity to draw up a very complete status report on the Copenhagen Process by taking account of current experiences of the European certification process related to the establishment of national frameworks and the new European system of apprenticeship credits for vocational training. Further training at university level will also be examined at this informal meeting, in conjunction with the initiative by the European University Association on this subject.

Giving everyone the opportunity to pursue an educational and professional career

The French Presidency will focus on the subject of guidance, information and advice, in order to enable moves between courses of study and changes in vocational careers. These procedures will help to reduce the numbers of people leaving the school system with no qualifications and will promote success. The Presidency will hold a conference on this subject in September 2008 in Lyon.

Taking our opportunities in space

Space is a significant driver for growth and competitiveness for European industry. The French Presidency therefore aims to encourage development and progress in this promising sector.

Based on the development of the Galileo and Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) programmes, many applications will serve the citizen in the longer term, whether at the level of improved monitoring of environmental data or in the interests of better management of natural and industrial hazards. The GMES forum organised at Lille in September 2008 will mark the inauguration of the first GMES services and will allow us to present the expected benefits to users. The subject will be addressed at the meeting of the Competitiveness Council in December 2008.

The French Presidency also aims to enhance the role of the European Union as a major player in space policy, embodying an ambitious, independent and coherent policy.

The informal meeting of European Aerospace Ministers, also involving the European Parliament and the Commission, will be held at the European Spaceport in Kourou on 21 and 22 July 2008. It will provide an opportunity to discuss the new priorities that the European Union might draw up in the field of space on subjects including climate change, security and competitiveness.

➤ *A Europe of competitiveness*

The French Presidency will work to promote European competitiveness both internally and externally.

It will seek an agreement on the measures to be taken to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – the “Small Business Act” for Europe – proposed by the Commission. The Presidency particularly aims to work on access to funding, especially for innovative SMEs, on integrating the internal market to the advantage of SMEs by adopting the idea of

the European Private Company and on improving the protection of industrial property rights and promoting entrepreneurship. It will continue the efforts to facilitate access for SMEs to public markets and to simplify the administrative and legal situation for SMEs.

The French Presidency will continue to work on the sustainable industrial policy presented by the Commission. In fact, the transition towards a low-carbon-emission economy is a major opportunity for European industry, and not only in terms of cost: Europe can facilitate this transition and turn it into a competitive advantage, by promoting low-carbon technologies, defining common norms and standards for environmental performance and by stimulating demand. The issue is to enable European industry to take full advantage of the new markets and economic opportunities and to be in the forefront of the transition to a “green” economy. On the fiscal side, the French Presidency will lead discussions on the possibility of applying a reduced rate of VAT to green products on the basis of the pending communication from the European Commission.

“Competitive clusters” are a key tool for industrial and economic competitiveness. Based on a communication from the Commission on these “clusters”, the French Presidency will examine ways of promoting the emergence of European clusters of global importance.

The French Presidency will continue the efforts to deploy IT infrastructures, which are of strategic importance for European competitiveness, particularly for high-speed fixed and mobile broadband.

The French Presidency will also seek an agreement on the current amendment to the European regulatory framework for electronic communication networks and services (the third “telecommunications package”), a key issue for a competitive Europe.

➤ ***A Europe safeguarding the interests of its enterprises and consumers***

Following the communication from the Commission on *A Single Market for 21st Century Europe* on 20 November 2007 the Presidency will strive to reinforce the internal market, paying particular attention to raising obstacles to trade and protecting consumers.

The French Presidency will also continue the efforts of the Slovene Presidency to establish a single legal system for patents, which would represent a real improvement for enterprises, especially SMEs. It will strive to make progress towards a Community patent, which would be standardised throughout the territory of the European Union, at an affordable cost but guaranteeing maximum legal security and preserving current linguistic balances.

The Presidency aims to reinforce the fight against counterfeiting at the Community level, in order to arm itself against the dangers this may pose to health, safety, the economy, employment and creativity. It is essential to mobilise the European Union and the Member States on this matter. Following the communication expected from the Commission, the Presidency will propose an integrated plan for the period from 2009-2011 based on a number of major policy lines, including the fight against counterfeits that are a danger to the health and safety of consumers and the fight against the globalisation of this phenomenon, particularly in negotiations with third countries. It will support the establishment of a European observatory on counterfeiting.

The Presidency will continue the work already started on modernising the customs system and facilitating trade, particularly by implementing a centralised customs clearance process. On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the European Customs Union, it will focus on the future role of the customs services.

The Presidency will strive to reinforce the protection of consumers within the internal market. In particular, it will support the principle of amending the *acquis communautaire* in the sphere of consumer protection and the initiative from the Commission to set up a European consumer scoreboard. It will aim to further the proposal for a regulation on the provision of food information to consumers and an amendment to the Regulation concerning novel foods and novel food ingredients. The Presidency will work to reach an agreement with the European Parliament by the end of the year on the legislative proposal concerning the safety of toys, which is currently under discussion.

The Presidency will pursue the “better regulation” initiative. In particular, it seeks to focus on making Community legislation more accessible.

The Presidency will strive to advance initiatives in the area of tax law, particularly where obstacles to the smooth operation of the internal market are identified. In particular, it will endeavour to take forward the discussions on an amendment to the rules applicable to financial services in the field of VAT and an amendment to the rules applicable to excise duty on fuel. The Presidency will also seek a political agreement on the proposal to be put forward by the Commission in July for a directive on reduced rates of VAT.

The fight against fraud and tax evasion is another way of removing the obstacles to the internal market. In this area, the Presidency will strive to further the efforts aimed at plugging the loopholes in the Savings Directive; to support the work aimed at reinforcing the arrangements for combating fraud within the current VAT system, with a view to implementing them quickly; and finally, to promote the establishment of a structure of cooperation to combat VAT fraud (Eurofisc).

1.4. An economic and financial Europe to promote growth and employment

➤ *Reinforcing financial stability*

The development and growing integration of the financial markets have provided additional room for manoeuvre in financing the economy while also improving the sharing of risk. Nevertheless, the upheavals experienced since the summer of 2007 underline the need to reinforce the stability and transparency of the financial system and to remedy these malfunctions.

The French Presidency will implement the roadmap for financial stability, stressing the need for greater transparency in the markets, greater responsibility on the part of the various players in the financial sphere, and the establishment of adequate supervision of trans-European financial groups.

On the question of transparency, a special effort needs to be made by the professionals and authorities concerned to provide investors with complete and readable information. The French Presidency will seek an agreement on rating agencies, in order to establish an efficient monitoring system at the European level. The French Presidency will also focus on the management of liquidity and the processing of securitisation transactions by way of an amendment to the Directive on capital adequacy. These activities will be carried out in close coordination with the work in progress at the international level, on which the Presidency will seek common positions.

➤ *Improving the European system of supervision*

The French Presidency will strive to reinforce the supervision of cross-border financial groups and to promote a convergent application of finance law throughout the European Union. With regard to insurance in particular, it will ensure that the adoption of the “Solvency II” proposal enables harmonisation of the rules and practices of control, in order to

advance the integration of the European insurance market and to implement better protection for insured parties.

➤ ***Pursuing financial integration in Europe***

Retail financial services are an important aspect of daily life for the citizens of the European Union, but they are as yet insufficiently integrated. In this context, the French Presidency will strive to respond to the legitimate expectations of European citizens, particularly by supporting the initiative being taken at the European level to remove the obstacles to banking mobility, and by encouraging the work aimed at constructing a Europe of payments.

In the back-office domain, over and above the work on the *Target 2 Securities* project being run by the European System of Central Banks and the European Central Bank itself, the French Presidency will ask the Council to evaluate European initiatives in order to arrive at greater comparability of prices, greater legal and fiscal harmonisation, and improved prudential supervision at the European level.

The Presidency will work towards the introduction of a European passport for fund management companies as part of the amendment of the UCITS Directive, to give substance at last to the idea of a single market in financial management.

➤ ***Maintaining the smooth working of Economic and Monetary Union***

The French Presidency will be marked by a number of major milestones for the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU).

The EMU reaches its tenth anniversary this year, and the single currency appears to be a success, although some challenges remain to be addressed to assure the smooth operation of the Economic and Monetary Union in the interests of growth and employment. In this context, and following the communication from the Commission and the work already done under the Slovene Presidency, the French Presidency will urge the Council to work closely with the Euro Group to move forward on the proposals put forward by the Commission. The French Presidency will place particular stress on better coordination within the euro area, particularly by way of increased dialogue with social partners, to take greater account of economic developments in the euro area affecting the employment market and competitiveness. It will aim to reinforce the role of the euro area on the international financial stage, building on the progress made in 2007, and taking advantage of summits between the European Union and third countries (EU-China, ASEM, etc.), which will demonstrate the ability of the EU to assert its fundamental interests.

During its six-month tenure, the Presidency will carry out work relating to the implementation of the Stability and Growth Pact, particularly the procedures for excessive budget deficits. Within the framework of the Lisbon strategy renewed in 2005, the Council will organise an exchange of views on horizontal issues of common interest to the European Union, on the basis of the national reform programmes to be presented by the Member States in the autumn.

On the matter of statistics, the French Presidency will pursue the work in hand, ensuring continuity with the preceding Presidencies, and hopes to see progress on all the provisions currently under discussion.

Finally, a new President of the Euro Group will be appointed during the French Presidency.

2. MAKING EUROPE MORE ATTENTIVE TO THE RIGHTS, SECURITY AND ASPIRATIONS OF CITIZENS

2.1. An area of freedom, security and justice

Developing a common area of justice, freedom and security has become a vital dimension of European integration, based upon a balance between the free movement of people, strengthening the security of European citizens and respecting fundamental rights and individual freedoms. In line with this balance, the French Presidency intends to do all it can to make further progress.

During the second half of 2008, it will be up to the French Presidency to continue the efforts made over recent years to equip the Union with the tools it needs to achieve closer cooperation between the authorities of the Member States that are responsible for justice and security and to prepare for the future.

On this point, during the second half of the year the results are due to be presented of the work carried out by the Future Group, which has enabled the ministers of home affairs and immigration, on the one hand, and, at the initiative of France, the ministers of justice, on the other hand, to reflect on the main principles that ought to underpin the next stage in achieving this common area.

➤ *Towards a renewed political commitment on asylum and immigration*

In December 2007, the European Council set out its view that developing a comprehensive European migration policy remained a fundamental priority of the Union and highlighted the need for a renewed political commitment on this front. The French Presidency will respond to this call by proposing to its partners that a European Pact on Immigration and Asylum should be adopted at the European Council.

The aim of this Pact will be to lay the foundations for a reinforced common policy based on responsibility and solidarity, resting upon the three dimensions of the global approach to migration, which includes better organisation of legal migration, more effective combating of illegal immigration and the promotion of a close partnership between migrants' countries of origin, transit countries and countries of destination.

Aside from the allocation of competences between the European Union and its Member States, which must be abided by, in an area of free movement of people the decisions taken by one have consequences for the other. Within this context, the Pact will consist of several strong political commitments to be monitored by the European Council.

Thus, within the framework of the Pact, the French Presidency will call for legal immigration to be organised, taking into account the Member States' needs and their abilities to take in immigrants; for integration to be promoted; for illegal immigration to be combated, in particular by ensuring that illegal immigrants are actually removed; for Europe to be better protected by more effective border controls; for a Europe that provides asylum to be developed; and for a partnership to be built with the migrants' countries of origin and transit countries, to contribute to their development.

Naturally, the French Presidency will work hard to translate the basic guidelines of the Pact on Immigration and Asylum into specific actions:

- in the sphere of legal migration, it will work to conclude the negotiation of the proposal for a directive on the conditions of entry and residence of highly qualified workers, which aims to make the European Union more attractive by introducing measures to promote the mobility of stakeholders within the common area;
- with regard to integration, it will organise a ministerial conference on integration, to be held on 3 and 4 November 2008, to contribute to the implementation of the European agenda on this issue;
- in relation to illegal immigration, it will seek an agreement at first reading on the proposal for a directive laying down sanctions against employers of non-EU nationals with an irregular migration status. Such a measure represents a vital complement to a more effective removal policy, stepping up the fight against the demand for illegal workers, which acts as an incentive to those considering illegal immigration;
- with regard to the integrated management of external borders, it will continue work to enable the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders (Frontex) to fully carry out its tasks and to become a more effective instrument of the Union's solidarity in supporting Member States to tackle crises. On the basis of studies carried out within the agency's management board, it will take into account the specific features of particular EU land and sea borders and will examine how to step up its operational role;
- the common policy on visas will be carefully monitored, with the aim of adopting the Community Code on Visas and promoting the development of the Visa Information System (VIS), and in particular the use of biometrics. Reciprocity will be the goal, especially through the extension of the US Visa Waiver Program to European citizens who do not yet have access to it;
- on asylum, the French Presidency will devote its efforts to embark upon a new stage in the introduction of a common European system, taking into account the action plan presented by the European Commission in June. To this end, it will organise a ministerial conference to be held on 8 and 9 September 2008, to enable discussion between the Member States and civil society organisations. Without neglecting the objectives of a common procedure and a uniform status, it will promote practical measures that might assist the Member States, particularly the creation of a European Support Office. Finally, it will examine any other legislative proposals that the Commission may put forward, before the end of 2008, regarding reception conditions for asylum-seekers, the establishing of the State responsible for the asylum application (Dublin) and Eurodac;
- the meeting of the Second Euro-African Conference on Migration and Development, to be held in Paris on 20 and 21 October this year, will be an opportunity to relaunch implementation of the action plan that was adopted in Rabat in July 2006, by giving it a more concrete form. The aim of this meeting will be to identify projects that can translate into practice the partnership between migrants' countries of origin, transit countries and countries of destination, in the three spheres covered by the global approach to migration. This global approach will also be evaluated, on the basis of a communication by the Commission, at the European Council to be held on 11 and 12 December 2008.

All these measures will build on the Tampere (1999-2003) and The Hague (2004-2009) programmes, as well as the Commission communication of 17 June on a common immigration policy for Europe. These will constitute the elements of an effective, balanced common policy on migration.

➤ *A safer Europe for citizens*

The French Presidency will work to fight crime and insecurity effectively in all aspects:

- in the Member States' joint fight against international terrorism, it will work to develop joint instruments: the introduction of a database dedicated to events relating to threatened or actual malicious acts of a nuclear, radiological, biological or chemical nature (NRBC); strengthening and upgrading the role of the EU Joint Situation Centre (SitGen) of the General Secretariat of the Council; continuing with work on the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes ('Check the Web'); drawing up a manual of best practices, mainly for use by the prison of the Council community, within the context of efforts to prevent radicalisation and the recruitment of terrorists; examination of measures to allow access by consular staff to relevant information contained in the Schengen Information System (SIS), in accordance with an early detection strategy to identify persons suspected of involvement in terrorism;
- on combating organised crime, the French Presidency will propose to its partners to step up the fight against cyber-crime, through the creation of an illicit content warning platform with the assistance of the European Police Office and European Police College. It will also raise the awareness of the Member States concerning trafficking in arms from the Balkans through a joint operation on their main road and rail routes and those in transit countries. It will support the implementation of a European network of heads of units specialising in combating trafficking in human beings;
- with regard to combating drugs, it will be the task of the French Presidency, on the basis of a proposal by the Commission, to bring work on a new EU action plan for the 2009-2012 period to completion. On actions aimed at countries or regions particularly affected by trafficking in narcotics or chemical precursors, it will pay special attention to the Western Mediterranean, where it will propose the creation of an Anti-drugs Coordination Centre, to be known as CECLAD-M. Arrangements for a closer dialogue with Western Africa, which has become a significant transit region for cocaine from South America, will also be explored;
- finally, in relation to the fight against eco-mafias, the French Presidency will work to identify the best way to combat trafficking in toxic waste.

The French Presidency will then endeavour to consolidate the European foundation upon which an ever closer cooperation between the relevant authorities of the Member States is based. It will continue with the development of the second-generation Schengen Information System (SIS II). In the same perspective, it will take steps to bring about the definitive adoption of the decision integrating the main provisions of the Prüm Treaty into the EU legal system. This has done much to open up the path to the exchange of data relating to DNA files, fingerprints and vehicle registrations, which are especially necessary in combating serious crime.

The French Presidency will also attach great importance to completing work to integrate the European Police Office (Europol) within the EU legal system. With regard to training, the activities of the European Police College will be assessed, especially with reference to operational cooperation needs. Contact between Europol and Frontex will be encouraged in order to better combat networks specialising in illegal immigration, and thus to combat organised crime.

The French Presidency will propose to its partners the drafting of a methodology and a manual of best practice designed to promote the model of Police and Customs Cooperation Centres (PCCCs) among the Member States, and the drafting of a system for the use of radiocommunications in border areas. It will also take the initiative of developing joint rail

patrols, on the basis of the possibilities offered by the Prüm Treaty, and exploring the idea of “European police stations”, comprising officials from the Member States involved in population movements, in areas where there is a high concentration of tourists or where major events take place.

The creation of other operational tools will be planned, in relation to stolen cultural goods (setting up a European database and stepping up operational cooperation with regard to the possession and handling of stolen goods) or combating the use for criminal purposes of the possibilities offered by “roaming” agreements between mobile phone operators.

Finally, with regard to the external dimension, the Presidency will launch a study of the perspectives and instruments involved in the EU’s relations with non-EU countries within the sphere of justice and home affairs.

The ministerial meetings with Russia and the United States will be an opportunity to deepen the partnership with those two countries, while continuing to respect European values. The French Presidency will continue to explore an agreement with the United States on data protection which might act as a basis for increased exchanges of information between both sides of the Atlantic.

With regard to combating terrorism, priority will be given to more intense dialogue with the countries of the Maghreb and Sahelian Africa. The meeting of the EU-Western Balkans Forum in the sphere of justice and home affairs, which is to be held in Zagreb on 6 and 7 November 2008, will be an opportunity to step up joint efforts to combat organised crime. An analysis of threats on this front will be explored more deeply with the assistance of Europol and the Southeast European Cooperation Initiative (SECI).

➤ ***A Europe of more effective justice***

Making Europe safer for citizens goes hand in hand with improving the efficiency of European justice.

The French Presidency will work to achieve the adoption of the plan to review the decision establishing the legal cooperation unit Eurojust, whose purpose is to strengthen the powers of the unit’s national members. At the same time, it will ensure that Eurojust’s access to Europol files is improved, through a new agreement between the two agencies.

The French Presidency will seek the adoption of a decision on the creation of a European information system on criminal records, enabling them to be linked together.

With regard to child protection, the French Presidency will promote the “kidnap alert” system, building on the exercise carried out in June 2008 with the Benelux countries. It will pay particular attention to strengthening the legal security of the most vulnerable people, including incapacitated adults under the protection of a guardian.

The creation of a European legal area without borders rests upon the mutual recognition and approximation of the national legal systems of the Member States.

The French Presidency will also move forward with examination of the framework decision on judicial supervision.

With regard to harmonisation, the Council and the European Parliament have recently reached an agreement at first reading on the directive on the protection of the environment through criminal law. Within this context, the French Presidency will seek the adoption of the directive on ship-source pollution, which also lays down an obligation for the Member States

to apply criminal sanctions in a sector that is particularly emblematic of the consequences irresponsible behaviour can have on the environment.

Concerning family law, the French Presidency will work to bring about the adoption of the regulation on maintenance obligations and to find a solution to the issue of the law applicable on divorce (Rome III).

On other civil law aspects, the French Presidency will propose to its partners a deeper reflection on the content of a common framework of reference for contract law. It will launch a debate on the possible usefulness for European citizens of mutual recognition of authentic instruments.

A Europe of justice can only progress if all the stakeholders are fully mobilised.

The French Presidency will promote the emergence of a common legal culture within the European Union. It will endeavour to promote European training for judges and professionals in the justice system. It will launch the debate during two days of training of judges and public prosecutors (21 and 22 July 2008) in Bordeaux, and will attempt to obtain the support of its partners for a common European training programme. The aim will also be to launch, in September 2008, a training course involving various institutions in the Member States, especially on combating terrorism, the care of minors, access to the law, mediation or alternative penal sanctions.

The French Presidency will work to develop e-Justice, particularly in preparing for the opening of a European portal to the public in 2010.

➤ *A Europe protecting fundamental rights and citizens' rights*

The creation of a common area of justice, freedom and security puts into play the values that are integral to European citizenship, which is based above all on the rights and guarantees enshrined in the treaties.

The promotion of fundamental rights will be at the heart of various events to be organised during the second half of the year, particularly on the subject of data protection. The adoption of the framework decision on data protection will be an important issue for the French Presidency, which will continue the consultations on the European PNR proposal.

The French Presidency will take action to reinforce European response capacity in the event of disasters, particularly in the sphere of civil protection. The European Union has gradually equipped itself with prevention, preparation and intervention resources to tackle catastrophes both within and outside the EU. The Presidency will ensure that these efforts are continued and intensified. To the same end, the Presidency will endeavour to enhance cooperation between the Member States on consular matters, through the Lead State concept and the development of a European network of consular training.

With regard to prevention, the French Presidency will strive to intensify work on the implementation of early warning systems, to put in place a European training network in the spheres of civil protection and humanitarian aid and to step up cooperation on research and development. It will work on increasing European crisis management and response capabilities, as well as improved cooperation and coordination with all the bodies responsible, starting with the United Nations. With regard to intervention, it will work to identify deficiencies on transport, coordination and deployment, and to strengthen European humanitarian aid and civil protection capabilities. It will also propose converting the European Commission's Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) into a proper centre for monitoring civil protection operations, equipped with a planning and operational management capability, and in the long term achieving the pooling of the Member States' resources, based on the

experience of the European Rapid Intervention Force (FIRE 5). Finally, it will look at the possibility of establishing a framework for assistance to European citizens facing emergencies in countries outside the EU. The first decisions and later stages may be sketched out in a roadmap to be presented during the second half of 2008, setting out guidelines for the future.

2.2. A Europe of culture, youth and sport

The French Presidency will work to emphasise the cultural dimension during the second half of 2008, because it is a powerful element in identity, as well as bearing witness to the shared history of the countries of Europe. The cultural dimension also involves the challenges of cultural diversity and dialogue between cultures as well as highlighting all the cultural wealth of the Member States.

➤ *Commitment to culture*

The French Presidency will work to develop the cultural dimension of the European project in terms of three aspects:

- highlighting, protecting and increasing access to European heritage, partly through the launch of the prototype of the European digital library, as well as the introduction of a European heritage label, that will be granted to sites emblematic of European history and memory;
- promoting intercultural dialogue and cultural and linguistic diversity;
- confirming the place of architecture in national and European strategies for sustainable development. This subject will be explored in more depth at the European forum on architectural policies, to be held in Bordeaux in October 2008.

With regard to audiovisual policy, the French Presidency will ensure that the European Union is a major player in the digital revolution:

- through a thorough exploration of the issue of creative online content, with encouragement to the cultural industries, telecommunications companies and Internet service providers to work together to increase the availability of online content, while ensuring that intellectual property rights are properly protected;
- by protecting children when they are using the Internet, by adopting a Community programme.

➤ *Commitment to youth*

The French Presidency will develop four aspects of work on youth:

- young people's health, following up on the Commission communication entitled 'promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society' and the Green Papers on nutrition and mental health. Special attention will be paid to the problem of addiction;
- the promotion and recognition of young people's voluntary activities as a factor for the development of young people's mobility within Europe. The Presidency will strive to advance work relating to the Commission's draft recommendation;
- continuing the implementation of the European Youth Pact;

- the youth dimension of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, particularly within the context of a Euro-Mediterranean approach.

➤ ***Commitment to sport***

In line with the approach of the White Paper on sport and the 'Pierre de Coubertin' action plan, the French Presidency will pay particular attention to recognising the place of sport in the European Union by:

- seeking an agreement that lays down the special nature of training for young athletes;
- beginning work on the structuring of the profession of sports agent and supervision of club management;
- promoting the adoption of guidelines on the promotion of sports activities as ways to improve public health.

3. REINFORCING EUROPE'S ROLE ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

3.1. Giving renewed impetus to a Europe of defence and security

The French Presidency's main focus with regard to defence is strengthening the military capabilities available in Europe.

➤ ***A security strategy for the next decade***

Updating the European Security Strategy, which was adopted in 2003, should make it possible to revive joint analysis of threats, on the basis of which defence resources and measures to step up security can be defined. Consequently, it will fall to the French Presidency to support the work carried out by the SG/HR on the European Security Strategy adopted in 2003, based on the conclusions of the European Council of 14 December 2007. Working together with our main partners, we will put forward new elements intended to add to (new challenges) and enhance (nature of military capabilities, EU-NATO cooperation) the strategy. The aim is to produce a document to be adopted by the European Council of December 2008.

➤ ***Strengthening military and crisis management capabilities, developing the EU's instruments***

A key goal for the French Presidency will be to develop and strengthen the European security and defence policy (ESDP), equipped with credible resources, in order to enhance the role of the European Union as a global player in crisis management and thus to meet the expectations of our citizens and the international community.

Creating the political conditions necessary for a renewed impetus in developing military capabilities in Europe will require the following action from the French Presidency:

- giving the European Union aspirations that are appropriate to new crises and threats: the EU must be able to better organise its intervention capability, by deploying the whole range of military and civilian operations, including a rapid reaction capability, without prejudice to its ability to deploy a major operation to separate parties (60 000 men for one year);
- launching a package of significant new capacity-building projects, initiated by a few countries and open to any nations wishing to participate, to meet operational needs, (strategic air transport, tactical transport, air mobility, in-flight refuelling, space observation);

- strengthening civilian crisis management capabilities (swifter mobilisation of police officers, customs officers, judges);
- finding flexible, innovative solutions for capability development (pooling, specialisation on a voluntary basis). The capability development plan produced by the European Defence Agency will play a vital role in stimulating cooperation between Europeans;
- promoting closer cooperation of national research and military technology policies, and seeking to draft joint strategic programmes in order to guarantee the future of the European arms industry;
- creating a real internal defence market. The French Presidency will endeavour to promote the facilitation of trade in defence products within the European Union in order to strengthen the industrial and technological defence base. The Presidency will continue the efforts already underway to reach a political agreement on the European Commission's "defence package";
- on the basis of lessons learnt from operations and operational needs identified, strengthening European capabilities for planning and conducting ESDP military and civilian operations;
- enabling defence ministers to meet to monitor operations and capability-building and to take decisions on the subject, within the framework of the General Affairs/External Relations Council;
- promoting joint European training courses (military "Erasmus") and a growth in exchanges between national training bodies; the joint action establishing the European Security and Defence College needs to be adapted.

The French Presidency also intends to continue with efforts in the field of the EU's crisis management, emphasising the coordination of evacuations of residents, maritime surveillance capabilities and mine clearance capacities.

Methods for financing ESDP operations will be tackled by means of the revision of the Athena mechanism, planned under the French Presidency.

➤ ***Developing partnerships for security***

- cooperation with NATO, both within the framework of the strategic partnership for crisis management and on the ground, particularly when operations are underway in the same location;
- enhancing the relationship between the EU and the UN (particularly in relation to crisis management);
- continuing relations with the other main partners, and particularly the African Union (implementation of the EU-Africa strategy and the action plan).

➤ ***Placing the European Union at the forefront of the fight against proliferation and terrorism***

Strengthening the diplomatic and political resources of Europeans is a priority in order to effectively tackle the threats represented by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism.

The Presidency will endeavour to:

- increase the EU's contribution to non-proliferation efforts (European Union action plan against proliferation) in support of multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament systems;
- reinforce the EU's instruments to prevent transfers of destabilising weapons, particularly in relation to the illegal trafficking of small arms and light weapons;
- mobilise all the resources of the European Union and its Member States to combat terrorism (early detection, information sharing, cooperation within the EU and with third countries);
- strengthen the level of protection against cyber-attacks.

➤ ***Non-proliferation and disarmament***

Within a context of persistent arms proliferation crises, the Presidency will stress the importance of the non-proliferation issues at stake. It will endeavour to strengthen the tools in this sphere, in the form of a European Union action plan to counter proliferation, and will propose ways of making progress to its partners, particularly with regard to a ban on cluster munitions and on illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

➤ ***Multilateral cooperation***

The Presidency will work to step up cooperation between the UN and the EU, particularly with regard to peace-keeping and international security, crisis management and development.

The Presidency will also encourage cooperation between the EU and the Council of Europe, as well as between the EU and the OSCE.

3.2. Enlargement and neighbourhood: working to create an area of stability and prosperity

➤ ***Croatia and Turkey***

Pursuant to the enlargement strategy agreed on by the European Council of December 2006 and in line with the conclusions of the Council of December 2007, the French Presidency will continue the negotiations already underway on the basis of the progress made by each of the candidates in achieving their obligations.

➤ ***Western Balkans***

The French Presidency will confirm the European destiny of the countries of the western Balkans in accordance with the conclusions of the European Council of December 2006. While being attentive to the consolidation of progress made recently in the stabilisation and association process, it will examine whether the conditions have been met, by each of the countries, on their own merits, in order to move closer to the EU. Particular attention will be paid to the stability of Kosovo, in part through the deployment of the justice, police and customs mission (EULEX).

➤ ***Mediterranean***

The French Presidency will launch the Union for the Mediterranean at the Paris summit on 13 July. While retaining the significant political achievements of the Barcelona process in terms of stability and democracy, the Union for the Mediterranean should give a new

framework and new impetus to the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue, based on genuine partnership through new governance and specific projects with a regional dimension, particularly in the fields of decontaminating the Mediterranean, energy, civil protection and transport.

Taking into account the characteristics of the partner countries, the French Presidency intends to bring about the completion of the work in progress to define an advanced status for Morocco as regards the European Union, which could function as a benchmark for other countries in the region. The objective of strengthening relations with Israel, which the Presidency will pursue in keeping with the outcome of the Association Council of 16 June, will have to take into account developments in the situation in the Middle East with a view to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

➤ ***Eastern dimension***

With respect to the summit with Ukraine, it will aim to give political impetus to the negotiation of an enhanced agreement, with a view to moving on to a major stage in the definition of an ambitious partnership with a country of strategic importance for Europe.

At the same time, it will work to ensure that the launch of the negotiation of a new agreement with Russia reflects a new form of relations with that partner, particularly in relation to the economy, energy, security and human rights.

The Presidency will work on developing the implementation of the European Union's strategy for central Asia, particularly in the field of energy security.

3.3. Working for a sustainable development agenda

➤ ***Development policy***

France will hold the Presidency in a global context marked by the food and energy crises. The conference of 3 July on agriculture and development in Brussels will demonstrate, from the outset of the French Presidency, Europe's commitment to food security and safety. In keeping with the conclusions of the European Council of 19 and 20 June 2008, the Presidency will look at the responses to be made to the rise in prices of basic products.

Looking ahead to international meetings on development, the Presidency will encourage the definition of a common position that makes good use of the role and experience of the European Union, which donates over half of world aid.

With regard to the effectiveness of aid, progress needs to be speeded up with a view to better complementarity of aid between countries, and responses geared to situations of conflict and of fragility need to be put forward. The French Presidency will work to ensure that this process is carried out in partnership with the beneficiary countries, by encouraging broad participation from civil society.

Above and beyond these international commitments, the Presidency will emphasise the subject of local governance, particularly in relation to the European Development Days. Based on the Commission communication on local governance and territorial development, a charter for cooperation on support for local governance will be put forward. It will also initiate work on access to care and the sustainable funding of health systems through the mobilisation of tools that are appropriate to the conditions in each developing country.

Special attention will be paid to the links between migration and development (impact of migrants' savings, job needs in productive sectors, regional dimension and the impact of climate change).

Finally, the Presidency will also attempt to include aspects of adaptation of developing countries connected with climate change in its external actions, particularly with a view to the Conference of the Parties to be held in Poznań in December 2008.

➤ ***Integrating the partner countries into the global economy***

In order to promote the integration of the partner countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific region into the global economy and assist regional integration, the Presidency will continue work to bring about the signing of full regional economic partnership agreements, including accompanying measures.

3.4. Promoting human rights and the rule of law

In the context of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 2008, the Presidency will continue to promote human rights and their universal nature, particularly within the United Nations and other international bodies. Emphasis will be placed on combating violence against women.

3.5. Promoting trade rules based on openness and reciprocity

On trade issues, the French Presidency will continue the efforts made by the European Union to reinforce the creation of a multilateral trade system. One of the channels for this approach will be the quest for a comprehensive, ambitious and balanced outcome within the framework of the Doha round of talks.

The French Presidency will promote the principle of reciprocity in the European Union's trade with its partners in order to improve its negotiating position and strengthen the defence of its interests.

➤ ***Ensuring that European businesses can access the markets of countries outside the EU***

Greater opening up of the markets of some third countries, including their public contracts, would give European businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, better opportunities for growth. It would make it possible to obtain the requisite counterpart to the opening up of the Community market and would encourage fairer economic competition. The French Presidency will encourage the work being done to this end.

➤ ***Promoting fair international competition***

The promotion of European standards in international negotiations is an important issue, particularly in relation to intellectual property, the environment and also safety. The French Presidency will be particularly attentive to this point.

The French Presidency will work to ensure that the European Union reinforces intellectual property rights in all its bilateral and multilateral agreements, and particularly the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA).

➤ ***Continuing bilateral negotiation efforts and exploring a strengthening of trade relations with developed countries***

European backing for the multilateral system does not rule out an ambitious policy in terms of free trade agreements. The French Presidency will support all the advances made in the free trade negotiations conducted by the Commission provided that their provisions guarantee an appropriate level of reciprocity.

In addition, the French Presidency will promote the launch of a study on the strengthening of our trade relations with the industrialised countries.

3.6. Establishing new partnerships with the various players on the international stage

➤ Africa

The French Presidency will endeavour to implement the positions laid down in the EU-Africa strategic partnership that was adopted at the Lisbon summit of December 2007 and to monitor the action plan. In particular, it will develop initiatives in the fields of peace and security, migration, access to energy and adaptation to climate change. It will also endeavour to progress towards the signing of full economic partnership agreements, including accompanying measures, especially to promote agricultural development, making it possible to renew a commitment to regional integration in Africa.

During the French Presidency, the first EU-South Africa summit will be organised, in line with the strategic partnership launched in 2007.

➤ Asia

At the ASEM summit and the summits with our main Asian partners, the French Presidency will devote itself to reinforcing dialogue and cooperation with the region in the political and economic spheres and on global subjects of general interest, such as human rights, energy security and combating climate change. These meetings will provide an opportunity to intensify, in particular, economic, monetary and trade dialogue with the emerging powers of the region, with a view to achieving balanced relations based on reciprocity.

➤ Transatlantic relations

The French Presidency will continue to reinforce relations with the United States, particularly through the implementation of the economic cooperation programme adopted in 2007 and regulatory dialogue.

At the summit with Canada, it will aim to develop closer relations with the country.

➤ South America

The French Presidency will work to consolidate the foundations of a joint action with the countries of South America and the Caribbean along the lines of the approach set out in the Lima summit. It will continue with the negotiation of association agreements with Mercosur, the Andean countries and the countries of Central America.

The summit with Brazil will make it possible to develop the strategic partnership established with this country in 2007, through the adoption of an action plan.

Finally, the French Presidency will seek to enhance relations with Mexico, which is already linked to the European Union through an association agreement.

➤ The Gulf

The French Presidency will closely monitor the negotiations for an association agreement with the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council and a trade and cooperation agreement with Iraq.

➤ **EFTA**

The French Presidency will endeavour to bring to a conclusion the Commission's negotiations on the issue of cantonal taxation in Switzerland and will support the Commission in its efforts to negotiate on the future financial contribution of the EEA-EFTA States to cohesion policy.

**Main meetings, conferences and events
during the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union**

Event	Date	Location
“European Social Services Conference” (European Social Network)	2-4 July	Paris
“Who will feed the world? Towards diverse and sustainable agriculture, engines of development.”	3 July	Brussels
“Euromed Competitiveness Seminars” (MEDEF – confederation of French businesses)	3-4 July	Marseilles
Celebration of the 40 th anniversary of the Customs Union	3-4 July	Paris
“Youth Event: Young People – Agents of Intercultural Dialogue”	5-9 July	Marseilles
“High-level seminar on EU-NATO relations”	7 July	Paris
“The European Union and its Overseas Entities: Strategies to Counter Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss”	7-11 July	Reunion
“Cinema, Europe, the World: Which Film Cooperation for the European Union”	7-8 July	Paris
European Industry Day: “Industrial ambition for France and Europe” (<i>Groupement des fédérations industrielles</i>)	10 July	Paris
Meeting of the ministers for European affairs	12-13 July	Brest
“Formalization of the first European network of territorial communities with populations of 150,000 to 800,000” (Assembly of French Departments)	15-18 July	Avignon
“EUROJUST: joint investigation teams and sharing of procedures”	17-18 July	Toulouse
Meeting of the ministers for space affairs	20-22 July	Kourou
“The future of training for magistrates and judicial personnel in the European Union”	21-22 July	Bordeaux
“Feedback on the management of natural disasters”	29-31 July	Aix-les-Milles
“Young Europeans’ Summer University”	22-23 August	Nantes
“The challenges and future of the European sheep industry”	4-5 September	Limoges
“Mobility, dialogue, participation: towards an active European citizenship” (European Civic Forum – European Commission)	4-6 September	La Rochelle
“Building a Europe of Asylum”	8-9 September	Paris
“i-2010” Conference	8-9 September	Paris

Event	Date	Location
"Quality assurance in higher education establishments in Europe"	9-10 September	Strasbourg
"European priorities and proposals from the financial services industry" (Eurofi)	10-12 September	Nice
"Worker Mobility"	11-12 September	Paris
"European coordination to promote road safety"	11-12 September	Paris
"GMES Forum 2008: Together, take better care of the Planet"	16-17 September	Lille
"Protecting vulnerable adults within the European judicial area"	17 September	Lille
"Managing transitions: lifelong guidance in the European Area"	17-18 September	Lyons
"Security challenges facing the European Union and Central Asia"	17-18 September	Paris
Meeting of ministers for family affairs	18 September	Paris
"Creative online content"	18-19 September	Paris
"Access to European Law" (French Bar Associations)	18 September	Brussels
"Europe at school"	19 September	Paris
"The shape of European policy to 2020" (European Think Tank Forum - Aspen Institute, France)	19-20 September	Paris
"Equal Opportunities Summit"	29-30 September	Paris
"Europe on the move: meeting of representatives of European citizens residing outside their country of origin" (Assembly of French nationals abroad)	30 September	Paris
"General Assembly of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions"	1-3 October	Bayonne
"Building effective multilateralism with the new global players" (European Union Institute for Security Studies)"	2-3 October	Paris
"The new frontiers of the culture economy"	2-3 October	Paris
"Health risks and imports"	3 October	Paris
"The European Job Fair"	4 October	Paris
"Europe of Sport"	5 October	Paris
Convention of the AeroSpace and Defence Industries Association of Europe (ASD)	6 October	Paris
"Open Days 2008" (Committee of the Regions of the European Union)	6-9 October	Brussels and French regions

Event	Date	Location
"Learning sciences in the Europe of knowledge"	8-9 October	Grenoble
"Encounters with History" and "Annual Book Fair"	9-12 October	Blois
"European Forum for Architectural Policies"	9-10 October	Bordeaux
"From the European Company to the European Private Company"	10 October	Paris
"Young Europeans and the Europe of tomorrow"	10-11 October	Nantes
"Europe of Health: Serving patients"	13-14 October	Paris
"European Road Safety Days"	13 October	Paris
"Combating illegal employment practices"	13-17 October	Marseilles
Round table on poverty and social exclusion"	15-16 October	Marseilles
"Industrial Property and the Internal Market"	16-17 October	Strasbourg
"Youth Employment in Europe" (The Committee for National and International Relations for Youth and Popular Education Associations – European Youth Forum)	17-18 October	Paris
"Biomarine Forum: the situation of ports and maritime transport (Biovision)"	20-24 October	Toulon - Marseilles
Euro-African Conference on "Migration and Development"	20-21 October	Paris
"The quality of European public services"	20-22 October	Paris
"EU-UN Cooperation in Security and Crisis Management"	20-22 October	Paris
Conference on sustainable development (Eurocities)	22 October	Lyons
"Accelerating innovation in Europe" (Europe INNOVA)	22-24 October	Lyons
"Which European Contract Law for the European Union?"	23-24 October	Paris
"Making the most of your European citizenship" (The European Youth Parliament)	24 October- 2 November	Rennes
"The French territorial communities and the European project: achievements and outlook" (Committee of the Regions)	24 October	Paris
"The future of European development policies" (European-level meeting of NGOs)	27-30 October	Paris
"Social services of general interest"	28-29 October	Paris
"Towards low-carbon power: the European programme for technological research"	28 October	Paris

Event	Date	Location
"Social inclusion: a European approach for the enrolment of students with disabilities"	29-30 October	Clermont-Ferrand
"European Rail Forum: Freight without borders"	29 October	Paris
Summit of the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (nrg4SD)	29-30 October	Saint-Malo
"Territorial cohesion and the future of the EU cohesion policy"	30-31 October	Paris
Monitoring meeting of the Stuttgart Conference on small and medium-sized businesses (Permanent Assembly of Chambers of Trade)	30-31 October	Tours
"Europe against Alzheimer's Disease"	30-31 October	Paris
"European Defence Capabilities: challenges and realities"	30-31 October	Marseilles
2008 Civil Forum - Euromed Non-Governmental Platform	31 October- 2 November	Marseilles
Ministerial meeting on integration	3-4 November	Vichy
"Biodiversity and agriculture: today's challenges and future research for sustainable agriculture"	4-5 November	Montpellier
"Europe of higher education: reinforcing the space for mobility"	4-5 November	Nancy
Mediterranean Civil Forum on Euro-Mediterranean intercultural dialogue	4-6 November	Marseilles
"Governance and performance of education establishments in Europe"	6-7 November	Poitiers
"The European Forest-Based Sector: Bio-Responses to Address New Climate and Energy Challenges"	6-8 November	Nancy
"Social security and demographic changes from a European perspective" (<i>Caisse Nationale d'Assurance Vieillesse</i>)	7-8 November	Paris
"The European Union and the Arctic"	9-10 November	Monaco
"Emerging social issues in a changing Europe"	12 November	Paris
"Equal opportunities for men and women"	13 November	Lille
"Vocational training and securing career paths"	13-14 November	Paris
"Competitive clusters"	13-14 November	Nice
"Transnational social dialogue"	13-14 November	Lyons
European Parliament of businesses (Eurochambres)	14 November	Strasbourg
"European cities of science"	14-16 November	Paris

Event	Date	Location
“European development days”	15-17 November	Strasbourg
“Culture, media and economy in Europe”	17-18 November	Avignon
Closing conference of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue	17-19 November	Paris
“Renewable energy and energy management week”	17-22 November	Paris
European Aviation Summit: “Aviation and Environment”	17-19 November	Bordeaux
“Competition days”	18-19 November	Paris
“Social Corporate Responsibility: how can works councils be involved in guiding decisions which further social cohesion and ensure the sustainability of business development” (European Trade Union Confederation, EUROPLACE)	20 November	Paris
“Young researchers in Europe”	20-21 November	Rennes
“Social experiments in Europe”	21-22 November	Grenoble
“Drug money, black economy and seizure of criminal possessions in Europe”	21 November	Paris
Meeting of ministers for housing, urban development and territorial cohesion	24-26 November	Marseilles
“Sustainable development and pesticides”	25-26 November	Paris
“Sentence execution in Europe: what is the outlook?”	25 November	Roubaix
“Information and communication technologies conference: information technologies”	25-27 November	Lyons
Conference of the Mayors of France on Europe (<i>Association des maires de France</i>)	26-28 November	Paris
“European Sports Forum”	26-27 November	Biarritz
“The most favoured European woman clause” (Association: “ <i>Choisir la cause des femmes</i> ”)	27-28 November	Paris
“Digitalisation of cultural heritage: the European digital library”	27-28 November	Paris
“Initial vocational training of young people on sandwich courses: Europeanisation of career paths”	27-28 November	Paris
“European Salon of Education”	27-30 November	Paris
“The security of Europe’s energy supply”	1er December	Paris
“Young people’s health”	1-3 December	Lille
“Cities Forum on sustainable cities and climate change”	2-3 December	Montpellier

Event	Date	Location
"Competitiveness of European eco-industries"	3-4 December	Lyon
Celebration of the 50 th anniversary of Business Europe	4-5 December	Paris
"Enhancing the value of European heritage"	4-5 December	Avignon
National day of the European agenda for social inclusion ('Agir contre l'exclusion' Foundation)	5 December	Paris
"Strengthening European consumer confidence: revising the <i>acquis communautaire</i> and administrative cooperation"	5-6 December	Paris
"Enterprise and Development" (French Development Agency)	9 December	Paris
"Major infrastructures for research"	9-11 December	Versailles - Saclay
European Forum of non-governmental organisations on Human Rights	10-13 December	Paris
Mediterranean Biodiversity	18-19 December	Nice