

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
SOUTH EAST ENGLAND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
JOINT EUROPE COMMITTEE**

Date: 22 February 2008

Subject: **Update on Slovenian EU Presidency Priorities**

Report of: Anke Seidler, Head of South East England Brussels Office

Recommendation:

That the Committee note the report.

I. Priorities of the Slovenian Presidency for the European Union.

I.1 Slovenia is the first new member state country to take over the presidency of the European Union. Having worked with Germany and Portugal on a joint 18 month work programme, Slovenia is now responsible for implementing the remaining work programme in the six months until June 2008. This paper gives an overview of the Slovenian Presidency's main priorities.

I.2 The Slovenian Presidency has identified the following key priorities:

- A successful ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty, signed at the end of last year, designed to provide a new framework for the European Union (EU) before the next elections to the European Parliament in summer 2009.
- Finalising the energy and climate change package, including the details of how member states will share the burden for implementing the EU's goals in cutting greenhouse gas emissions and raising the share of renewable energy.
- Continuing work on implementing the Lisbon Agenda. The Slovenian presidency does not plan to introduce any radical policy changes but will aim to encourage member states to put more resources into research and innovation, renewing business potential, helping small and medium sized enterprises and improving the labour market.
- Working on enlargement by continuing talks with Croatia and Turkey and strengthening ties with the Western Balkans to provide stability to the region. The presidency will also help to manage the EU's role in Kosovo.
- Supporting 2008 as the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue by helping to build a horizontal dialogue among young people.

- I.3 The Presidency will also take measures forward that will help strengthen the area of freedom, security and justice, the so-called Schengen area, by enhancing police cooperation and information exchange and working towards a common European asylum system.
- I.4 Work on enhancing the external role of the EU in the area of security, development and economic relations will play a key role for the Slovenian presidency and they will chair a number of high level summits with the USA, Japan and Latin American countries.
- I.5 Slovenia is a small country with limited administrative resources and no experience in managing an EU Presidency, a challenging task even for more experienced countries. The government has therefore set itself manageable ambitions and achievable goals and has made a major effort in gaining expertise and extensive knowledge of dossiers, that were rolling forward throughout all the three presidencies. It has also developed an understanding of domestic political circumstances in other member states likely to have an impact on the Presidency's priorities. Slovenia, the "star pupil" during the EU membership negotiations, because of its professional preparations and conduct throughout the process, is widely expected to be perform well during the Presidency until June 2008.

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