

Slovenian Presidency Council of the EU

July – December 2021

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Useful Links

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Slovenia will guide the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for the second time from July 1st to December 31st 2021, concluding the trio presidencies Germany-Portugal-Slovenia.

This Presidency begins in times of easing of the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic when the main focus is to be expected on the lessons learnt and advancing in the recovery activities. Most of the discussions related to the Conference on the Future of Europe will take place under this Presidency. At the

same time, there are several key initiatives for the health sector that will be opened, implemented or concluded in the upcoming 6 months.

- Opening of the revision of the general pharmaceutical legislation
- Closing the Regulation on the reinforced mandate of EMA, Regulation on serious cross-border threats to health and Regulation on the strengthened role of ECDC.
- Beginning of legislative process of establishment of the European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Agency (HERA)
- Implementation of the New Industrial Strategy

The Presidency's priorities are divided into four pillars:

1. The resilience, recovery and strategic autonomy of the European Union

In the area of *resilience*, the Presidency will focus on the EU's ability to anticipate and deal effectively with different crisis situations that exceed the capacity of individual member states to manage them, such as future pandemics, large-scale cyberattacks or natural disasters. The lessons learnt from COVID-19 will be reviewed with a focus on the cross-border impact of the measures implemented to prevent the spread of the virus. Strengthening the capacity, sustainability and resilience of healthcare systems as well as a high level of self-sufficiency by ensuring the supply and management of stocks of key goods and services will be on the agenda of this Presidency.

In terms of the ongoing legislative process, the Presidency will focus on the proposals in the European Health Union package. At the same time, the Presidency is planning to progress on the legal framework for cooperation between member states including preparation of pandemic preparedness plans and coordination mechanisms. In July, Slovenia will organise a high-level conference on solutions for resilient healthcare systems. The Presidency will support further development of the rescEU capacities.

On the *strategic autonomy*, Slovenian Presidency will intensify the debate on ensuring the autonomy of the European Union in strategic areas such as the supply of medicines, vaccines and medical equipment. Special

attention will be paid to the implementation of the New Industrial Strategy. A debate on measures to protect the internal market with the view to strengthening the sustainability of European value chains and better access of European companies to global integrated value and supply chain will be opened. Open trade policies, strengthening of alliances and cooperation around the world while enhancing approaches to efficiently address unfair commercial practices will be on the agenda of the Presidency. Furthermore, attention will be on reinforcing the EU's independence in the area of vaccines and key medicines.

The Slovenian presidency will begin working towards the establishment of the HERA with the objective to have its own research and development capacities as well as adequate infrastructure at the European level to enable the production of medicines and vaccines.

The *recovery* will be done in mind with the green and digital transition goals, such as the use of green technologies to safeguard EU companies' competitive advantage internationally. Regarding digitalisation, the aim is to reach greater EU digital autonomy. The Presidency will focus on making progress in the negotiations on the Artificial Intelligence act. Furthermore, a high-level conference on artificial intelligence is planned to take place in September. Slovenia also wants to focus on aligning the Member States regarding the proposals for the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act.

The Slovenian Presidency will also highlight the role of science and research in achieving the goals of successful economic recovery and an affective dual transition.

The Presidency is also planning to focus on updating the state aid rules. Furthermore, the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility with the completion of the process of approving the national plans will be the priority of the Presidency.

2. Conference on the Future of Europe

The Presidency is aiming to organise two plenary sessions and several European Citizens' Panels. On top of this, the Presidency will organise a series of events with a high level of international participation aimed at a broad debate on the main issues of the future of the development of the EU. At the beginning of September, the Presidency will hold the 16th Bled Strategic Forum under the title The Future of Europe.

3. A Union of the European way of life, the rule of law and equal criteria for all

Slovenia is planning to focus on the consideration of and exchange of opinions on the second annual report on the rule of law situation across the EU as well as the continuation of the debate on the situation in the Member States.

4. A credible and secure European Union. A union that is capable of ensuring security and stability in its neighbourhood

The Presidency will highlight the importance of creating and strengthening strategic alliances, particularly the transatlantic alliance, Israel and the democratic Indo-Pacific countries. Slovenia will devote special attention to the Western Balkans and will organise the EU-Western Balkans summit in October. In addition to the Western Balkans, there will be a focus on setting priority objectives for cooperation with Eastern partners which will be the central topic of the EU-Eastern Partnership summit in October. Attention will be also given to the strategic aspects of the EU-UK relations, mainly the implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement and the Agreement on Trade and Cooperation.

Furthermore, the presidency will focus on challenges regarding immigration, the fight against terrorism and fake news.

Further on the health and industrial agenda of the Presidency:

- **Strategic Report on the Implementation of the Internal Market Action Plan**
 - o Work on better enforcement of internal market rules and the crisis mechanism for the internal market
- Progress in negotiations on the recast of the **Directive on the Legal Protection of Databases**
- **Development and implementation of innovative solutions for resilient health systems**
- Crisis preparedness and response
 - o Cooperation and mutual coordination as well as clearly defined tasks and competencies at both national and EU level
- Availability and accessibility of medicines
 - o Open strategic autonomy of EU
 - o Discussion on new solutions at the EU level for **improving the accessibility and availability of medicines**
 - o Addressing the issue of shortages of medicines with a lack of business interest such as antimicrobials or **generic oncology treatments when it comes to repurposing**
 - o Implementation of the **European Medicines Strategy**

Key political moments of the Slovenian Presidency

- * **8 July:** Joint meeting of the EU Directors for Pharmaceutical Policy & Pharmaceutical Committee
- * **8-9 July:** Informal meeting of employment and social affairs ministers
- * **15 July:** High-Level Conference on Introducing Innovative Solutions for Resilient Healthcare systems
- * **21-22 July:** Informal meeting of competitiveness ministers (Internal market and industry)
- * **14 September:** Heads of Medicines Agencies (HMA) Meeting
- * **21 September:** Joint Meeting of the Pharmacovigilance Risk Assessment Committee (PRAC) and the Co-ordination Group for Mutual Recognition and Decentralised Procedures – Human (CMDh)
- * **22-23 September:** Competition Day
- * **28 September:** Competiveness Council (Research-Internal Market)
- * **29 September:** Competitiveness Council (Internal market and industry)
- * **4-5 October:** Informal meeting of health ministers
- * **21-22 October:** European Council
- * **11 November:** Foreign Affairs Council (Trade)
- * **15-16 November:** Meeting of Chief Medical Officers
- * **25 November:** Competitiveness Council (Internal market and industry)
- * **29 November:** Foreign Affairs Council (Trade)
- * **6 December:** Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (Employment and social policy)
- * **7 December:** Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (Health)
- * **16-17 December:** European Council