



PROGRAMME OF THE HUNGARIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE SECOND HALF OF 2024



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Hungary takes over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union at a time of extraordinary circumstances and challenges. Our continent is facing common challenges due to the war in our neighbourhood, the EU lagging more and more behind its global competitors, a fragile security situation, illegal migration, the vulnerability of international supply chains, natural disasters, the effects of climate change, and the impact of demographic trends. Furthermore, as 2024 is a year of transition, the Hungarian Presidency will have to ensure the continuity of work in the Council, in cooperation with a newly established European Parliament and European Commission, and will have to start the implementation of the Strategic Agenda 2024–2029, setting out the long-term guidelines for the Union’s future work. The Hungarian Presidency and Europe must be prepared for the fact that wars, armed conflicts, humanitarian crises in the world, and their aftermath will continue to challenge the continent in the second half of 2024.

Hungary will work as an honest broker, in the spirit of sincere cooperation between Member States and institutions, for the peace, security and prosperity of a truly strong Europe.

Hungary’s priorities for its Presidency have been determined with this in mind.

1. New European Competitiveness Deal

In the current international context of multiple challenges, where Europe is lagging behind its global competitors, it is vital to improve the productivity and thus the competitiveness of the Union and its Member States, and to stimulate growth. It is in our common interest to address the effects of the difficult economic circumstances of the recent years, such as high inflation, increased public debt, high energy prices, fragmentation of international supply chains, or lower European productivity and slower economic growth compared to our competitors, and to put the EU economy back on an upward trajectory. Therefore, the Hungarian Presidency will place a strong emphasis on improving European competitiveness, integrating this objective into all policies, by applying a holistic approach. Our aim is to contribute to the development of a technology-neutral industrial strategy, a framework for boosting European productivity, an open economy and international economic cooperation, as well as a flexible labour market that creates secure jobs and offers rising wages in Europe, which is a crucial factor to growth and competitiveness.

The adoption of a New European Competitiveness Deal is a key priority of the Hungarian Presidency in order to restore economic development and create the conditions for sustainable growth, deepen the internal market, focus on supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, promote the green and digital transition in partnership with European economic stakeholders and citizens, international cooperation, and ensure the stability and sustainability of jobs.



2. The reinforcement of European defence policy

The ongoing and emerging conflicts on the continent and around the world clearly demonstrate that Europe needs to significantly improve its defence capabilities, international crisis management responsiveness, and capacities. Beyond defence policy alliances and cooperation, the European Union must play a greater role in guaranteeing its own security by strengthening its resilience and capacity to act. Bearing this in mind, the Hungarian Presidency will place particular emphasis on strengthening the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base, including defence innovation and the enhancement of defence procurement cooperation between Member States, beyond the implementation of the Strategic Compass that defines the main directions of EU defence policy.

3. A consistent and merit-based enlargement policy

Enlargement is one of the most successful policies of the European Union. To preserve this favourable tendency, it is essential to keep enlargement policy merit-based, balanced and credible. The European Union has long been engaged in ensuring a European perspective for the Western Balkans, as the Community cannot be complete without the accession of this region. The region's integration benefits the EU in economic, security and geopolitical terms. To further broaden and deepen our cooperation, we will invite our partners to consultations both in the framework of the EU-Western Balkans Summit and the European Political Community.

4. Stemming illegal migration

The migratory pressure that Europe has been facing for several years is not only a challenge to the Union as a whole but also places a huge burden on individual Member States, especially those at the external borders of the Union. It has been a long-term objective of the EU to tackle this, which requires effective, even short-term instruments. In order to find the appropriate solutions, closer cooperation with countries bordering the EU is indispensable, as well as with the key countries of origin and transit. In addition, illegal migration and human smuggling must be curbed. In this respect, the Hungarian Presidency will pay particular attention to the external dimension of migration, including efficient cooperation with relevant third countries, more effective returns, and innovative solutions for rules on asylum. In addition, during the follow-up on the implementation of the annual priorities of the Schengen cycle, we intend to highlight the importance of external border protection and the need for EU funds for this purpose.

5. Shaping the future of cohesion policy

To ensure harmonious and balanced development in the Union, it is essential for Europe to reduce regional disparities as well as to secure economic, social, and territorial cohesion. A well-structured and balanced cohesion policy is the key instrument in this regard. Cohesion policy, as the main investment policy of the European Union, has proven successful for decades in achieving the objectives



enshrined in the Treaties. However, as the 9th Cohesion Report points out, there are still significant development gaps between Member States and even within regions, considering that more than a quarter of the EU's population lives in regions not reaching 75% of the Union's average development level. The convergence of these regions is not only crucial in terms of fully utilising the competitiveness potential of the EU, but it is also essential for the proper functioning of the Single Market. The Hungarian Presidency will aim for a high-level strategic debate on the future of cohesion policy, including its role in promoting competitiveness and employment, as well as in addressing demographic challenges.

6. A farmer-oriented EU agricultural policy

European agriculture may have never faced as many challenges as it does today. Extraordinary weather conditions caused by climate change, growing input costs, increasing imports from third countries, and overly stringent production rules have significantly decreased the competitiveness of the sector. The accumulation of these challenges led to a situation where the livelihood of European farmers is threatened. It is essential to view agriculture not as a cause of climate change, but as part of the solution, by engaging farmers in adopting more sustainable production practices. While guaranteeing food security, European farmers provide all EU citizens with basic public goods. Therefore, a long-term guarantee of food sovereignty and food security should be part of the strategic autonomy of the EU.

In the semester ahead, the Hungarian Presidency will encourage the Agriculture and Fisheries Council to take advantage of the institutional transition period and guide the new Commission in formulating the rules of the Union's post-2027 agricultural policy for a competitive, crisis-proof and farmer-friendly agriculture. Promoting sustainable agriculture is a key priority to find a rational balance regarding the strategic objectives of the European Green Deal, the stabilisation of agricultural markets, and a decent standard of living for farmers.

7. Addressing demographic challenges

The accelerating ageing of European societies, unsustainable social welfare systems, and labour shortages are long-standing and intensifying problems in all of Europe that need to be addressed urgently and effectively. Ageing society, green and digital transition, rural depopulation, increasing pressure on fiscal resources, and the changing world of work generate such demographic issues and challenges which need to be put into the spotlight. These problems have become increasingly important for the competitiveness of the EU and the sustainability of public finances. The Hungarian Presidency, fully respecting the competences of Member States, wishes to draw attention to these challenges, and the Commission's demographic toolbox, published in October 2023, provides a good basis for that.



Detailed program

General Affairs Council

The Hungarian Presidency will be defined by the start of the new institutional cycle. Within the transition period, our priority will be to ensure the smooth functioning of the Council and, once the next institutional set-up is in place, to continue inter-institutional cooperation and legislative activities. The Presidency will also begin the implementation of the **Strategic Agenda 2024–2029**.

INSTITUTIONAL TRANSITION During the Hungarian Presidency, the 2019–2024 institutional cycle will come to an end and the beginning of the 2024–2029 institutional period will present a major and complex task not only for the Presidency but also for the entire European Union. The primary objective of the Hungarian Presidency will be to facilitate a smooth **institutional transition** after the 2024 European Parliament elections, to ensure the continuity of work in the Council and to support the smooth functioning of the European Union through constructive cooperation and dialogue with the Member States and the new institutional actors.

STRATEGIC AGENDA The growing number and complexity of the challenges the EU is facing require a stable framework to set the direction of EU policies for the 2024–2029 period. The Hungarian Presidency will be responsible for launching the implementation of the priorities set out in the new **Strategic Agenda**, and incorporating them into the work of the Council.

RULE OF LAW Hungary will continue the dialogue on the rule of law within the Council by organising a horizontal and a country-specific debate, in line with the previous practice. Respecting and upholding the values enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union is the responsibility of all actors of the Union, Member States as well as EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies. The EU has a number of mechanisms for monitoring Member States, in particular with regard to their respect for the rule of law. However, the current EU toolbox does not allow for monitoring whether the rule of law is respected within the institutional system of the EU. The Hungarian Presidency aims to examine how to fill these gaps through the development of mechanisms.

TRANSPARENCY AND INTEGRITY The transparent functioning of the Union is a prerequisite to its credibility and reliability towards the Member States and their citizens. The Hungarian Presidency will particularly focus on the **Interinstitutional Ethics Body**, in order to ensure that the mechanisms for verifying if Member States comply with the values of the Union and the means available to scrutinise EU institutions in this respect are brought to parity.



DEFENDING OUR DEMOCRACIES The malicious incidents that have recently affected our democracies have highlighted the need to take appropriate steps to protect our citizens and our electoral processes from foreign interference. The Hungarian Presidency is ready to take this dialogue forward, while fully respecting the competences and sovereignty of the Member States.

THE FUTURE OF THE UNION Launched during our Trio Presidency, the dialogue on the **future of the integration** is a good basis for defining a carefully considered path for the Union, taking into account our common interests and national specificities. Based on the directions of the European Council, the Hungarian Presidency will continue the process of mapping the internal reforms needed for a successful European integration. The Hungarian Presidency will support the review of EU policies to ensure that they are fit for the challenges of the future, and is ready to continue discussions on the necessary innovations. Recognising their distinctive contribution to European identity, the Presidency will pursue an open, transparent and regular dialogue with historic churches in the spirit of Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

COHESION POLICY For decades, cohesion policy, as the main investment policy of the EU, has proven its success and its contribution to increasing the Union's competitiveness, strengthening its resilience, ensuring the well-functioning of the Single Market, and achieving common EU objectives. The aim of the Presidency is to encourage reflection on the future of cohesion policy, and to facilitate a strategic debate at the European Council. Additionally, the Hungarian Presidency plans to adopt Council conclusions on the necessary and prominent role of cohesion policy in effectively addressing demographic challenges.

ENLARGEMENT Enlargement is one of the most successful policies of the EU, contributing to the Union's security and economic development. The Hungarian Presidency will take forward the process on enlargement in line with the revised methodology, based on the reports of the Commission and following a merit-based approach, while taking into account the Union's capacity to absorb new members.

The Presidency will strive to achieve meaningful progress with candidate and potential candidate countries. A **credible enlargement policy** is a geostrategic investment in Europe's peace, stability, security and prosperity. Special emphasis should be placed on **regular political dialogue** with the partner countries, and on supporting them in meeting the Copenhagen criteria.

FIGHTING ANTISEMITISM AND FOSTERING JEWISH LIFE Antisemitism can be effectively combated by supporting and raising awareness of European Jewish life and defending the Jewish heritage of Europe. There are many ways to promote Jewish life, such as guaranteeing the security of Jewish communities, as well as preserving and promoting Jewish culture and heritage. Hungary has numerous good practices in these areas. Nevertheless, in light of the disturbing events that took place in Europe recently, it is also appropriate to strengthen the fight against antisemitism in all its forms and manifestations. Therefore, the Hungarian Presidency will also take up the



fight against antisemitism especially **by focusing on fostering Jewish life** and will pay special attention to regular exchanges of views on this issue. Beyond justice and home affairs, the Hungarian Presidency intends to continue cooperation in the fields of education and culture involving a wide range of actors, in particular Jewish communities and their international organisations. The Hungarian Presidency will review the progress of national strategies against antisemitism and plans to adopt a Council declaration on the subject.

NATIONAL MINORITY RIGHTS The Hungarian Presidency aims to promote the protection of rights of national minorities. The Presidency will organise discussions on how the European Union can make better use of the available instruments and opportunities within its competences, e.g. in the framework of cooperation with the Council of Europe. The Presidency aims to pay particular attention whether the rights of persons belonging to national minorities in the candidate countries are respected and enforced. The enlargement process must contribute substantially to the improvement of the situation of national minorities.

EU-UK RELATIONS The United Kingdom remains an **essential partner to** the EU in trade, foreign and security policy. The Hungarian Presidency will work to deepen EU-UK relations, its cornerstone being the correct and timely implementation of the existing agreements. The Presidency will strive to preserve the unity among Member States and will pay particular attention to safeguarding the rights of citizens under the Withdrawal Agreement and to the implementation of the Windsor Framework.

EU-SWITZERLAND RELATIONS The European Union and Switzerland are important political and economic partners, with strong cross-border trade relations and key cooperation in research and innovation. Switzerland is present on the internal market of the EU. The preservation of the unity of this market requires legal certainty, as well as the strengthening of economic and social cohesion. The Hungarian Presidency believes that the common understanding reached through exploratory talks with the representatives of Switzerland's Federal Council offers a solid, realistic and balanced package of agreements for the parties contributing to the reinforcement, modernisation and further development of bilateral relations. As Presidency, Hungary will be ready to contribute to the process where relations between the EU and Switzerland enter into a new phase.

ASSOCIATION AGREEMENTS WITH ANDORRA AND SAN MARINO The Association Agreements with Andorra and San Marino would enable the establishment of the deepest and most comprehensive relations with the European Union, contributing to more effective and closer cooperation, taking into account the specificities of these countries. After the conclusion of the negotiations, the Hungarian Presidency aims to facilitate the signature of the Association Agreements with these countries as well as their entry into force.



MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK The aim of the Hungarian Presidency is to ensure that the agreement reached at the European Council of the 1st of February 2024 is duly transposed into sectoral legislation, as the final step of the mid-term revision of the 2021–2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

Economic and Financial Affairs Council

The growth prospects of the European Union are fundamentally affected by uncertainties caused by geopolitical conflicts, fragmented supply chains, raw material prices, and a volatile international economic environment. The Hungarian Presidency, as the first one to transpose the priorities of the Strategic Agenda 2024–2029 in the work stream of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council, will promote dialogue about EU-level solutions that may help us implement the reforms and investments serving the green and digital transition effectively and sustainably, as well as a substantive improvement in the competitiveness of the European economy, despite the shrinking fiscal opportunities resulting from additional crisis management burdens in recent years. While taking into account the different characteristics of the Member States and respecting national competences, we want to focus our joint efforts on those areas where EU action has real added value at the European level, contributing to macroeconomic stability and the well-being of our citizens while also increasing the resilience of our economies.

ECONOMIC POLICY The multifaceted and complex challenges and external risks faced by the European economy require frameworks that ensure fiscal discipline, the financial resources for productive investments, and essential reforms for sustainable growth in a credible manner, without harming the integrity of the internal market or the principle of equal treatment among Member States. With this in mind, we will prioritise the implementation of the new rules of the reformed economic governance framework. The guidelines for the effective preparation and evaluation of the national medium-term fiscal-structural plans to be submitted in the autumn must be made available as soon as possible. To this end, open questions related to the content of the Member States' plans and the application of the new rules must be closed as soon as possible.

The next cycle of the European Semester is also to be launched in accordance with the new rules. The adoption of the autumn package (including the Annual Sustainable Growth Survey where Council Conclusions are foreseen) will provide an opportunity to put more emphasis on European competitiveness, highlighting initiatives and messages that improve productivity while strengthening the macroeconomic focus of the Semester. Its importance is obvious, since the productivity and innovation gap between the Union and its global competitors has become even more visible as a result of the war.



The exchange of views at the informal ECOFIN meeting will also contribute to strategic discussions aimed at improving competitiveness through the review of the fiscal challenges related to demographic trends.

In parallel, the Hungarian Presidency will closely monitor the economic and financial consequences of the war in Ukraine and it will continue speeding up the effective implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

ANNUAL BUDGET The goal of the Hungarian Presidency is to ensure the implementation of the 2024 EU budget and the timely adoption of the 2025 EU budget to secure stable and continuously available budgetary resources for the implementation of EU policies.

NEW OWN RESOURCES We consider it important that the EU budget has a predictable, transparent and simple revenue side. Therefore, we wish to ensure that these aspects are considered when examining the Commission's proposals for new own resources.

FINANCIAL SERVICES It is in our common interest to ensure that financial rules provide a clear response to the challenges of our time, and that we continue to guarantee financial stability. That is why we aim to advance the ongoing negotiations. Building on the work of previous presidencies, we will continue the negotiations on all seven ongoing legislative packages, and we intend to advance discussions on the future of the Capital Markets Union in line with the guidelines of the European Council. In this regard, the Hungarian Presidency is committed to increasing access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises and reducing the administrative burden on businesses. In the area of the Banking Union, the focus is on the **review of the crisis management and deposit insurance framework**, with the aim of improving the efficiency of bank resolution. The legislative package promoting private investments, i.e. the Retail Investment Strategy, is a remaining high-priority file from the last CMU Action Plan. The Council is discussing a number of legislative packages reflecting the challenges and opportunities of digitalisation. In this area, the package on the **payment services review, access to financial data and the digital euro** are of particular importance. We will seek to start trilogue negotiations with the European Parliament on the regulations amending reporting requirements and the Benchmark regulation.

TAXATION As regards taxation, our objective is to effectively advance the discussions on the taxation files and international issues currently on the agenda, achieving progress which responds to the needs posed by new business models, international cooperation, and fiscal revenues. High-priority areas: fighting tax evasion, ensuring legal certainty for taxpayers, and supporting the international engagement of the European Union. In the area of taxation, we see an opportunity to enhance the competitiveness of European businesses through digitalisation, the efficient use of information, and simplification.



CUSTOMS ISSUES Concerning the customs union, in the context of the modernisation of the regulatory and governance framework, cross-presidency negotiations on a reform package promoting significant long-term transformation are on the agenda. The goals of the revision of the Union's Customs Code are the following: to introduce several simplifications facilitating customs procedures; to set up a common EU customs data hub; and to create a new EU customs authority that would help Member States focus their inspection capacities on the most important areas. Our priority is to continue this substantive debate to ensure that the emerging customs union is future-proof and capable of addressing the challenges of the coming decades more quickly and efficiently.

Foreign Affairs Council

The security and geopolitical environment surrounding the EU has changed significantly in recent years. Besides the crises and conflicts that have been ongoing for years, emerging hotspots require the attention of the EU. Amidst the challenges, crises and armed conflicts, the Hungarian Presidency considers it a key task to advance the EU's external relations and partnerships in close cooperation with the EU institutions and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The active engagement of the EU is indispensable to contribute to the restoration of international peace and security, and to confirm that the EU is a trustworthy and reliable partner. The Hungarian Presidency intends to contribute to the strengthening of the EU's capacity as a global actor and will aim to promote mutually beneficial partnerships with third countries, keeping the interests of the Union and Member States in mind.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS The transformed and challenging geopolitical environment has highlighted the importance of strengthening and forging honest, mutually beneficial partnerships and effective multilateralism even more. In the direct neighbourhood and in the case of other partners of the Union, we must strive for common understanding, recognising that only common solutions can bring results to our shared problems in the long term. The Hungarian Presidency will strive to facilitate the forging of new partnerships.

The European Union stands by the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. The Hungarian Presidency will continue the work based on the previous decisions and guidelines set by the European Council.

To achieve the peace that ends the war and enjoys the widest possible international support, the global coordination and support efforts must continue. The Hungarian Presidency will endeavour to promote coordination with global partners and the most important donors in the field of support for the reconstruction of Ukraine. We will also work to ensure consistency and coherence between international and EU



support efforts, paying particular attention to the implementation of the Ukraine Facility, in this respect the goal of the Presidency is to guarantee that the Council maintain its steering role.

The EU has a vital interest in the stability of the **Western Balkans**, therefore our Presidency will support the deepening of specific cooperation projects with the region, particularly to promote regional cooperation and stability. The Hungarian Presidency plans to organise an **EU-Western Balkans Summit** in the region, and to **hold intergovernmental conferences with candidate countries when appropriate**. The objective is to ensure that the European Union remains the primary economic and political partner of the region, thus preventing third countries from gaining further ground and increasing their influence. It is in the basic interest of the EU to keep its immediate neighbourhood as stable and reliable partners, and that the region joins the EU in the foreseeable future. The Hungarian Presidency also considers energy as an important element of the integration of the Western Balkans, therefore, we will pay special attention to facilitating interconnections with the energy systems of the region, promoting energy transition and cooperation, aimed at exploiting its green energy potential.

Türkiye is an indispensable partner of the EU in many areas, such as energy security, overall regional security, and the fight against illegal migration. The European Union has a strategic interest in a stable and secure environment in the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as in a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship with Türkiye. Following the recent European Council conclusions, the Hungarian Presidency will therefore seek to give new impetus to deepening strategic cooperation in areas of common interest, and to promote the EU-Türkiye political dialogue, with regard to Türkiye's status as a candidate country. The Presidency places great importance on the resumption and progress of comprehensive settlement negotiations with Cyprus, which could also strengthen EU-Türkiye cooperation. The Association Council meeting and high-level negotiations should be resumed in order to promote dialogue. The goal is to keep the recommendations from the Joint Communication of the High Representative and the European Commission on the current EU-Türkiye political, economic, and trade relations on the agenda, and to advance these discussions, supporting Türkiye's rapprochement to the EU.

Organising **the European Political Community (EPC) summit** will be a priority task for the Hungarian Presidency. The EPC will continue to serve as an important forum for political dialogue, contributing to the ongoing exchange of views on the European security architecture.

Regarding **transatlantic relations**, the Hungarian Presidency intends to strengthen beneficial partnerships with the US and Canada in the economic, energy security, security and defence, trade and political fields. The Hungarian Presidency plans to foster and promote the efficient articulation and implementation of the strategic interests of Member States in the transatlantic partnership and will promote transatlantic security cooperation in EU-NATO relations. We will also foster joint work within the Trade and Technology Council (TTC).



In terms of guaranteeing the security, prosperity, and economic development of the Union, it is essential to establish the closest and mutually beneficial relations with the EU's immediate neighbour countries and regions. From this perspective, **Eastern Partnership** is crucial. The Hungarian Presidency will strive to further enhance cooperation with the countries of the South Caucasus region, with a special focus on the EU's energy security, developing trade routes, and preserving regional stability. Building on the **New EU Central Asia strategy (2019)**, the Hungarian Presidency will continue to strengthen cooperation in the areas of trade and economic relations, energy security, connectivity, common security challenges, as well as people-to-people relations and mobility, in line with the EU-Central Asia Roadmap and the Global Gateway strategy.

The Hungarian Presidency will support the implementation of the Joint Communication on renewed partnership with **the Southern Neighbourhood**, and the execution of the Economic and Investment Plan. The Presidency aims to strengthen cooperation in the areas identified by the existing Partnership Priorities with each country, and to facilitate Association Council meetings. We will encourage stronger EU actions for **food security in the region**. The Hungarian Presidency will also support the deepening of security and defence cooperation in the fields of **counterterrorism and addressing the challenges of illegal migration locally**.

The Hungarian Presidency will seek to enhance cooperation between **Europe and Africa**, both through regional international organizations and bilateral cooperation with individual countries. In order to address common challenges, the Presidency will work closely with EU institutions to use all instruments at their disposal in support of the countries concerned, including the Global Gateway Strategy, the NDICI financial instrument, the European Peace Facility (EPF), as well as CSDP operations and civilian/military missions.

The complex security challenges surrounding the **Sahel** region have a direct impact on Europe, including the European Union. In view of the changed geopolitical and geostrategic context, the Hungarian Presidency considers it important to develop a coherent EU position reflecting the current challenges, including the changing security aspects and the reinforcement of existing partnerships. Results can be achieved by maintaining bilateral dialogue and implementing comprehensive and complex (humanitarian, development, economic, diplomatic, and defence-related) assistance measures tailored to the needs of the partner states. The Hungarian Presidency will continue the implementation of the European Sahel Strategy, which is currently being developed with an integrated regional approach, tailored to the needs of each country.

To strengthen wider regional security and combat illegal migration, the Hungarian Presidency will, in addition to reinforcing existing **strategic partnerships** in North Africa (Tunisia, Egypt), seek to promote the establishment of further comprehensive agreements with the countries of the wider Sahel region (including Mauritania,



Senegal, and Chad) in cooperation with the European Commission. Additionally, we will emphasize the need for security-focused dialogue with other key regional actors (e.g., Niger, Libya).

Regarding **the Middle East**, it is regrettable that the conflict that erupted in the autumn of 2023 has halted progress resulting from the Abraham Accords, the Israeli-Palestinian talks under the Aqaba process, and the development of EU-Israel and EU-Palestinian relations. The EU most resolutely condemns Hamas for its brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attacks throughout Israel and recognises Israel's right to self-defence. Our common objective is to prevent a regional escalation of the conflict, alleviate the suffering of innocent civilians, and resolve the humanitarian crisis. To this end, particular attention is needed for the immediate and safe delivery of humanitarian aid to the civilians in need in Gaza. As another priority, the Hungarian Presidency will strive to ensure the significant role of the EU in the long-term political settlement of the conflict. The Presidency will seek to build consensus in the Union and will also support European engagement in the region to explore opportunities for new cooperation and further develop the existing ties. Building on the Abraham Accords, the Presidency will support the development of further trilateral cooperation (EU-Israel-Arab countries) in the region to promote regional integration.

The Hungarian Presidency will support more active cooperation with the **Gulf** countries by implementing the Joint Communication: A Strategic Partnership with the Gulf. We will strive to enhance EU-GCC relations in the fields of security, counterterrorism, energy and green transition, people-to-people contacts, trade, and investments. The Hungarian Presidency intends to step up EU efforts to restore regional stability and the security of supply chains in the Red Sea region.

The Hungarian Presidency is committed to strengthening relations between the EU and **Asia**, and with the **countries of the Indo-Pacific region**. The peace and prosperity of the Asian continent have a direct impact on European stability and competitiveness; therefore, dialogue and mutually beneficial cooperation should be maintained with all regional partners. The Hungarian Presidency will pay particular attention to intensifying trade, investments, and connectivity between the two continents. To this end, the implementation of the European initiatives in the region is particularly important, such as the Indo-Pacific strategy and Global Gateway's regional projects. The Presidency intends to promote free trade agreements, as well as partnership and cooperation agreements. Constructive and stable relations should be pursued with major countries of the region, such as China and India. We promote deepening the existing strategic partnerships of the Union with South Korea and Japan, and the closest possible cooperation with ASEAN as well as its Member States. The Presidency monitors security challenges such as Afghanistan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

A pragmatic and balanced approach towards China is a key objective of the Hungarian Presidency. **China** is an important trade and economic partner. In EU-China relations, we consider constructive dialogue on the economy and strategic security particularly important.



The latest crises also have an impact on regions outside of Europe, including **Latin America**. The Hungarian Presidency aims to enhance **mutually beneficial cooperation** with the countries of the region through international and regional frameworks, in the spirit of equal partnership, for example in the areas of climate change, connectivity, energy, and food security.

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY (CSDP) Strengthening European security and defence has become a priority in light of the steadily deteriorating security situation in Europe, strategic competition, and increasingly complex security challenges in the past decade. The Union must assume greater responsibility for its own security and defence. The EU must be ready to protect its citizens and to contribute to international peace and security by responding swiftly, decisively, and effectively to conflicts and crises outside its borders.

The Hungarian Presidency is committed to continuing the implementation of the **Strategic Compass**, thereby strengthening the role and relevance of the EU in the field of security and defence, as well as contributing to security in Europe. In implementing the tasks set out in the Strategic Compass, the Hungarian Presidency will support the work of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, as well as the European External Action Service.

The Hungarian Presidency intends to focus on **three main pillars** in the field of the Common Security and Defence Policy: strengthening the EU's military response and crisis management capabilities; increasing the effectiveness of European military capability development; strengthening the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base and promoting defence innovation.

Strengthening the military responsiveness and crisis management capacity of the EU is a priority for the Hungarian Presidency. Setting up the **EU Rapid Deployment Capacity** (EU RDC) and the relevant command and control system are key elements in this regard. Considering its importance, the Presidency also intends to support the regular organisation of joint exercises by offering a national exercise, as these promote interoperability between the armed forces of the Member States and the development of decision-making mechanisms.

In light of the current security situation, the Hungarian Presidency will also consider it a priority to ensure the stability of the **Western Balkans** and the **Sahel region** through EU military missions, cooperation and dialogues focusing on security, as well as providing support via the European Peace Facility. It is also important for the Presidency that the comprehensive activities of **civilian** missions should extend to the protection of minorities and cultural heritage.

Moreover, it is also a priority for the Hungarian Presidency to improve the sustainability of the **European Peace Facility**, to maintain the geographical balance of the instrument and to finish the review of the EPF.



The EU may only be a credible security actor if it has the military capabilities to match its level of ambition. To **increase the effectiveness of capability development**, we need to maximise the potential of existing EU defence initiatives. Therefore, the Hungarian Presidency is strongly committed to promoting strategic thinking on the future of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), and contributing to the PESCO Strategic Review, the second, decision-making phase of which will take place during our Presidency. In addition, if the ongoing review of the functioning and tasks of the **European Defence Agency** (EDA) leads to a revision of the Council Decision on the Agency during the Hungarian Presidency, we are also open to supporting it.

The EU has made successful efforts to promote **defence research, development and innovation**, as well as to **increase defence industry capacities**. The consistent continuation of those efforts is a priority for the Hungarian Presidency. To this end, we aim to promote reflection on the future of the **European Defence Fund** (EDF), and we wish to contribute to the **strengthening of the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base**. Therefore, our presidency wishes to pay special attention to the consistent representation of the goals set out in the **European Defence Industrial Strategy** (EDIS), in particular to the expansion of financing options and production capacities, better security of supply, as well as the swift commercialization of research, development and innovation results. The Hungarian Presidency also intends to advance the legislative tasks related to the **European Defence Industry Programme** (EDIP).

European bilateral security and defence partnerships with like-minded countries should be further developed, and emphasis should be placed on deepening EU-NATO cooperation.

In the field of security and defence, a stronger and more capable European Union positively contributes to global and transatlantic security, and also complements NATO, which remains the basis of collective security for its members.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION From the toolkit of development policy, we aim to highlight those elements that constitute the most effective approach to addressing the root causes of migration locally. Therefore, the primary focus of the Hungarian Presidency will be on strengthening the **humanitarian-development-peace nexus** in fragile contexts, **addressing the root causes of migration, tackling issues of global food security**, as well as supporting partnership collaboration based on the EU's new approach (bilateral partnership agreements).

We intend to emphasise the development of actions and support best practices aimed at assisting **communities in crisis areas** and promoting sustainable development, thus encouraging people to **remain in their home regions**. In this context, we support strengthening direct cooperation with local organizations in fragile and politically estranged contexts. Key factors in achieving these goals include job creation and the economic empowerment of women, promoting education and vocational training, protecting cultural heritage, addressing interrelations of nutrition and health, responding to challenges posed by climate change, and cooperating



with local organisations to promote peaceful coexistence among communities of different religions and ethnicities. During the Hungarian Presidency, priority will be assigned to highlighting various humanitarian and development aspects of food security issues, and particularly best practices for establishing local value chains, supporting small and family farmers, promoting climate-friendly food production, and strengthening the resilience of local production. **Throughout the semester, we plan to adopt Council Conclusions, under Hungarian Presidency priorities, on global food security, as well as about the special report by the European Court of Auditors regarding the operation of the EU Trust Fund for Africa.** To better understand the new partnership cooperation of the EU and showcase domestic best practices, we intend to organise a study visit to Egypt for the CODEV-PI and RELEX HQ/Global Gateway working groups. The Hungarian Presidency will also pay special attention to fragile states and the Sahel region. The complex challenges can only be successfully addressed by developing a comprehensive foreign policy toolkit in which international development cooperation and related strategic communication play an important, though not exclusive, role. For these regions, the most critical issues are restoring security and basic services and creating jobs.

We believe it is crucial to incorporate humanitarian aspects into our efforts, in order to better understand the specific needs and risks of the affected populations. We support professional dialogue focused on job creation and post-conflict labour market reintegration. Additionally, we aim to raise awareness about the connections between development cooperation and statelessness, emphasising the importance of birth registration in the Global South. **Partnership with local organizations to promote peaceful coexistence among different religious and ethnic communities** is key to achieving these objectives.

The Hungarian Presidency will consider the **implementation of the Samoa Agreement** as a horizontal priority, focusing on its main goals and clarified implementation rules. Additionally, we will work on strengthening bilateral relations with the ACP states within the framework of the new Agreement.

As to **humanitarian cooperation**, we will focus on forgotten crises, education about emergencies, preventive actions, and localisation. We aim to promote the **Global Gateway Strategy** in the Member States, engage SMEs and export credit agencies, and adopt the 2025 Flagship Projects list. We intend to adopt Council Conclusions on the effective implementation of the Global Gateway Strategy.

The Hungarian Presidency aims to make the **protection of cultural heritage** an integral part of the European external policy toolbox. To achieve this, the Presidency, in cooperation with EU institutions and international organisations, intends to promote the implementation of the content of the Council Conclusions adopted in 2021 on cultural heritage protection objectives. We will also encourage the review of the Conclusions.



At the same time, the goal of the Presidency is to strengthen the external dimension of cultural diplomacy in the institutional structure, in particular within the Council, with a special focus on the horizontal potential of cultural heritage protection.

TRADE POLICY Trade policy is one of the most important elements of the European toolkit to strengthen and build global, regional, and bilateral relations. In order to fulfil the global role of the EU, an ambitious, open, comprehensive and credible trade policy is necessary.

The **Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP)** is an important tool that supports the participation of developing countries in international trade. The Hungarian Presidency will monitor the implementation of the current GSP regulation, while continuing the work on the GSP review by preparing and, should the conditions be favourable, relaunching interinstitutional negotiations on the new regulation.

Regarding **Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)**, the Hungarian Presidency will place emphasis on advancing and, where possible, concluding the ongoing FTA negotiations. In addition to signing and ratifying the existing agreements, the relaunch of stalled negotiations with potential partners is a priority. For the sake of the credibility of the EU, the Hungarian Presidency will encourage shortening the time period between the conclusion of negotiations and the entry into force of agreements.

Regarding regional focus, the Hungarian Presidency assigns a special role to cooperation with the countries of the ASEAN region. The Presidency also considers the effective implementation and monitoring of the current free trade agreements as an important task.

Easing tensions with trading partners in the wake of protectionist trends in global trade is an important priority for us. Strengthening open and fair trade relations is a cornerstone of European competitiveness. Under the Presidency, we will pay particular attention to avoiding the escalation of trade tensions and we will examine the impact of restrictive measures on trade.

The Hungarian Presidency will continue the negotiations on the Economic Security Package.

One of the main targets of the Hungarian Presidency will be the effective implementation of the European **investment protection** policy through stronger cooperation with the European Commission. To effectively negotiate investment protection agreements, coordination and cooperation between Member States and the European Commission need to be enhanced. This may be achieved by increasing the frequency of formal and informal meetings at the EU level, and through the appropriate promotion of interests. The conclusion of sustainable investment facilitation agreements, which serve investment protection policy, is another priority of the Hungarian Presidency, especially with African partners. We support the assessment of potential agreements with Asian partners.



The Hungarian Presidency will also pay attention to preparations for the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference. The top priority here is **the restoration of the WTO dispute settlement system**. In addition, it is important for the WTO to become a central forum for policy debates on state intervention in industrial policy, global environmental challenges, and the role of trade in integration.



Justice and Home Affairs Council

Hungary will take over the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU in a crucial period: the general strategic priorities in the next institutional cycle will be defined by the Heads of States and Governments by adopting the Strategic Agenda in June. In order to ensure a seamless institutional transition, the Hungarian presidency will commence work on elaborating the strategic guidelines defining the priorities for the next institutional cycle in the justice and home affairs field.

STRONG EUROPEAN BORDERS, A CRISIS-RESILIENT SYSTEM Europe has a common interest in ensuring strong external borders, therefore, in order to strengthen their resilience, the Hungarian Presidency will build upon the experience of the past five years to launch a reflection process that will highlight the specific challenges faced by different types of borders, the proposed responses, including the role of Frontex, as well as the best practices and innovative solutions of Member States.

A key priority of the Hungarian Presidency is to **strengthen the resilience of the Schengen Area to crises**. Within the framework of the Schengen Cycle, the Hungarian Presidency will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of identified priority areas in order to maintain and streamline strong and robust Schengen governance.

The Hungarian Presidency will also aim to facilitate the **finalisation of the Schengen enlargement process**, in particular by fostering a consensus in the Council on the lifting of border controls at the internal land borders of Romania and Bulgaria.

The Hungarian Presidency wishes to ensure compliance with the schedule for the implementation of the new home affairs interoperability architecture, in particular with regard to the introduction of the European Entry Exit System (EES) as a new tool for increasing the internal security of the Schengen Area, and the preparation for the launch of the European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS).

Today, migration is the result of a number of crises: the growing number of armed conflicts and the economic crisis are putting increased migratory pressure on Europe, and European migration and asylum rules provide further opportunities for abuse in many aspects. Therefore, it is important to make our future regulatory and operational architecture crisis-proof and capable of addressing these challenges, and as part of this work, the Hungarian Presidency will continue the discourse on the implementation of the reforms concluded under the Belgian Presidency. Bearing in mind the weaknesses of the system, in order to improve the resilience of the Common European Asylum System, the Hungarian Presidency will **encourage Member States to exchange views on innovative solutions in the field of asylum**. Apart from assessing the security implications of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, it will also address the consequences of the war on refugees and continue the dialogue on the reception of displaced persons fleeing the Russian-Ukrainian war.



In order to reduce the abuse of our migration system, **enhanced action is required** to ensure the **effective enforcement of returns**. The identification of non-cooperating third countries in the area of readmission will remain an important task, and the Hungarian Presidency intends to promote dialogue on the mutual recognition of return decisions among Member States.

Strengthening the harmonised implementation of the common visa policy is of strategic importance to ensure the secure functioning of the Schengen Area. The priority objective of the Hungarian Presidency is to **conclude**, as far as possible, **the legislative negotiations on the revision of the visa suspension mechanism**, which will contribute to addressing the migration and security challenges in the Schengen Area in a more effective manner. We will place great emphasis on a **comprehensive review of the European visa waiver regime** and intend to continue the work to take forward the ongoing visa waiver and visa facilitation proposals.

In addition, the Hungarian Presidency will focus on addressing the remaining challenges identified by the evaluation of the Visa Code in order to ensure more harmonised visa issuance, including the sharing of best practices among Member States, and will closely monitor the secondary legislative processes related to the digitalisation of the visa procedure.

SECURE EUROPE Strengthening the security of the EU and its citizens is a key objective of the Hungarian Presidency. The Presidency pays particular attention to the **fight against terrorism and organised crime and to the strengthening of operational law enforcement cooperation**, which involves taking stock, in cooperation with the Member States, of the measures taken to date at Union level to effectively combat serious and organised crime, as well as of the experience shared between Member States in order to prepare the definition of the objectives for the next legislative cycle. The Hungarian Presidency is committed to strengthening law enforcement and judicial cooperation in the prevention, detection, and investigation of smuggling and trafficking of human beings and increasing the effectiveness of information exchange. The Hungarian Presidency also focuses on the fight against drug trafficking, promoting the implementation of the EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan and the EU Roadmap for combating drug trafficking and organised crime. The fight against illicit trafficking of cultural goods and environmental crime are also featured prominently on the agenda.

Organised **cybercrime** is a major threat to fundamental rights, critical infrastructure, and competitiveness. The Presidency pays particular attention to providing a safe environment for children, both offline and online. Our Presidency will continue to work on developing a long-term legislative solution to **prevent and combat online child sexual abuse** and on the **revision of the directive against sexual exploitation of children**. In the context of **electronic cross-border judicial cooperation**, the subject matter presents multiple high-level challenges in terms of both substantive criminal law and procedural law. The Presidency is ready to promote dialogue in order to identify effective and forward-looking common solutions while actively



participating in the development of EU positions at international level, in particular in the ongoing negotiations on the fight against cybercrime within the framework of the United Nations.

Building on the successful and open debate for a European consensus on the retention and access to law enforcement data in accordance with fundamental rights, the Hungarian Presidency intends to continue building trust among the relevant actors. The importance of training, information and communication on EU law enforcement priorities in Member States as well as in EU institutions, agencies and bodies is to be emphasised.

In the field of criminal justice cooperation, the Hungarian Presidency considers the continuation of the debate on the **future of criminal law** and the development of model provisions to be priorities, summarising the work of previous Presidencies. The Hungarian Presidency will also maintain its commitment to **victim support** and the **fight against corruption** and will continue legislative work in order to launch interinstitutional negotiations.

The Hungarian Presidency will continue its efforts to further streamline the **crisis management** structures of the EU, designed to support European resilience and our relevant critical infrastructure capable of responding to natural and man-made threats, in particular floods.

EFFICIENT EUROPE Within the framework of judicial cooperation, the Hungarian Presidency will initiate dialogue to promote effective legal solutions that are in line with the rapid development of cross-border processes.

The legal field must also contribute to the overall competitiveness of the EU, therefore, the Hungarian Presidency aims to develop the regulatory framework of civil judicial cooperation, taking into account **competitiveness** aspects and defining its criteria for the next institutional cycle.

In this spirit, the Hungarian Presidency will continue negotiations on the draft Directive on the harmonisation of certain aspects of **insolvency proceedings**. The issue of parallels and divergences inherent in the jurisprudence of international dispute resolution and European judicature also poses a particular challenge, which the Presidency plans to discuss together with the risks of over-regulation in the EU and highlight deregulation with the involvement of representatives of legislators, legal practitioners, and the law-seeking public.

The Hungarian Presidency is committed to improving access to justice, the overall efficiency and resilience of judicial systems, and the development of systems to support cross-border judicial cooperation, taking into account the importance of addressing the threats posed by the digital world and, in particular, the protection of vulnerable groups. The digital readiness of the European Union, the promotion of overcoming digital divides, as well as the exploitation of the potential offered by digital technologies and the use of artificial intelligence for judicial purposes, are the



keys to the competitiveness of the EU and its Member States alike. It is important to work closely with relevant international organisations and represent the interests of the EU and its Member States in an effective and targeted manner, with a particular focus on competitiveness aspects.

In the area of **e-Justice cooperation**, our aim is to explore the possibilities for the use of AI in the justice sector, following the adoption of the AI Act, in particular to improve access to justice. Establishing the foundations for the future of e-Justice and the policy orientations in this area through the relevant e-Justice Strategy and Action Plan 2024–2028 makes it timely to develop and properly follow up on new projects. One of the key elements in this context is to identify and promote the potential of innovative technologies in the field of justice. It is also essential to transform digital opportunities into practical solutions, in particular by facilitating preparations for the application of new rules on cross-border judicial cooperation and the digitisation of justice and by promoting the mutual exchange of experience between Member States.

In the area of civil judicial cooperation, the Hungarian Presidency will also seek to advance legislative work on the protection of vulnerable adults, the adjustment of rules on non-contractual civil liability to artificial intelligence, and the law applicable to the third-party effects of assignments of claims, as well as facilitating negotiations to advance other open legislative files.

The Hungarian Presidency attaches great importance to the promotion of processes for the protection of fundamental rights, and in this spirit, we will continue negotiations on the accession of the EU to the European Convention on Human Rights and the harmonisation of national procedures of data protection authorities.

COOPERATION BEYOND EUROPE The **external dimension of asylum and migration** is a prominent priority of the Hungarian Presidency. Addressing the root causes of migration, as well as the facilitation and development of cooperation with key countries of origin and transit are essential for dealing with the long-term challenges posed by migration. It is crucial to establish and implement comprehensive partnerships for effective cooperation between the EU and countries in regions of key importance, in line with the Operational Coordination Mechanism for the External Dimension of Migration (MOCADDEM).

The Western Balkans and the countries along the Silk Route are a **top regional priority** for us. At the same time, in view of the growing number of crises on the African continent and the increasing social, economic and political instability in the regions, which are expected to lead to massive migration flows, posing major challenges to European security, we will pay particular attention during the Hungarian Presidency to monitor the conflicts, humanitarian challenges and the security situation in the **Sahel region** and to develop relevant strategic priorities and possible local partnerships.



The integration of the **Western Balkans** region plays a pivotal role in guaranteeing the security of Europe both in the short and long term. Therefore, the Hungarian Presidency intends to actively promote cooperation with the countries of the region in the field of justice and home affairs and will continue its work in the framework of the EU-Western Balkans Justice and Home Affairs Dialogue, which includes facilitating the preparation of a ministerial conference in the region.

The Hungarian Presidency will also further contribute to the continuation of **Transatlantic relations** in the field of justice and home affairs cooperation by continuing work under the EU-US Justice and Home Affairs Dialogue and by pursuing negotiations on an agreement on the transfer of digital evidence.

Furthermore, the Hungarian Presidency will continue to follow up on judicial issues related to **Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine**, in particular the work carried out within the framework of and with the support of Eurojust. It is important that victims of war crimes and other international criminal activities have access to adequate protection and assistance through the options supported by the EU.

Agriculture and Fisheries Council

European agriculture has perhaps never faced so many challenges as it does today. Extraordinary weather events brought on by climate change, high production costs, emerging plant and animal diseases, the effects of wars, broken global supply chains, or increasing large-scale imports from third countries are putting constant pressure on the European agricultural sector. In parallel, agricultural actors must comply with a growing number of strict production requirements and face increased administrative burden. Farmers need answers to these challenges at the European level, therefore, the Hungarian Presidency will facilitate discussions on how to create a competitive, crisis-proof, sustainable, farmer-friendly and knowledge-based European food system.

In the field of fisheries, the Hungarian Presidency will devote particular attention to the development of a **sustainable and competitive European aquaculture sector**. Given that aquaculture is the animal protein production sector with the smallest environmental footprint, it can play a key role in making food production more sustainable, while assisting with the mitigation of the food sovereignty challenges caused by declining sea catches. In addition, it will be an important task for the Presidency to promote environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable EU fisheries by **setting annual allowable catches for fish stocks** in a predictable and science-based manner.

AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY Competitiveness, as a horizontal priority of the Hungarian Presidency, will be in the focus of discussions in the Agriculture and Fisheries Council. Special attention will be paid to the competitiveness of European



farmers, the agri-food sector, and the security of EU food systems. In this spirit, the Hungarian Presidency will take a firm stance at the international level for the application of the reciprocity principle. Building on the results of the Strategic Dialogue on the future of EU agriculture, discussions will commence on how direct payment and rural development subsidies of the future Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) can most effectively enhance the competitiveness of farmers and the food system. The possibilities of promoting generational renewal and preserving traditional European ways of rural living will also be discussed as this is a prerequisite to maintain agricultural production and to keep rural areas vibrant.

Only a **crisis-proof** European agriculture and food industry is capable of overcoming the various ongoing and future challenges. Council debates on the market situation will help identify the types of crisis management measures required in the future CAP for the various sectors. Regional cooperation is also crucial to effectively manage and counter crises stemming from transboundary animal and plant diseases. At the summit of EU and Western Balkan chief veterinary officers, the Hungarian Presidency will summarise the crisis management experiences and good practices of recent years.

Sustainable agriculture and forestry play an important role in combating climate change and protecting biodiversity and nature, thus preserving the values of our planet. An exchange of views will be organised on how the new green architecture of the current CAP contributes to achieving these goals. The Hungarian Presidency aims to continue negotiations on legislative proposals relating to plant and forest reproductive materials, forest monitoring, the protection of animals during transport, new genomic techniques and the welfare of dogs and cats. Hungary is committed to significantly reducing food waste on all levels of the food supply chain. We will continue to place special emphasis on the issue of reducing food waste throughout the Hungarian Presidency. Accordingly, we will present various national programmes and good practices to reduce food waste, from Hungary and other Member States during an international conference in Budapest in October 2024. Furthermore, a thematic event on soil conservation will be organised with the involvement of BIOEAST countries to celebrate Soil Day and the conclusion of the International Decade of Soils.

A **farmer-friendly** regulatory framework is essential for farmers and agri-food businesses to guarantee food security and contribute to achieving sustainability objectives. Therefore, the Hungarian Presidency will launch a debate on the experiences of the implementation of the CAP Strategic Plans and the new post-2027 delivery model. Furthermore, in cooperation with the Commission, the Presidency will examine the experiences on the implementation of the animal health law. In addition, preparations for the implementation of deforestation-free supply chain regulations will also be discussed. Moreover, the Hungarian Presidency will facilitate negotiations on the proposed amendment to the Common Market Organisations (CMO) regulation and to the regulation defining rules on cross-border enforcement of unfair trading practices (UTP).



Establishing a **knowledge-based** and innovative agriculture is crucial for developing a sustainable and competitive bioeconomy. The European agricultural and associated industrial processing sectors play a pivotal role in restoring disrupted global supply chains and achieving the goals of a sovereign European food system and European Strategic Autonomy. Greater focus must be placed on knowledge transfer and creation of local added value. Within the framework of the BIOEAST initiative, Hungary aims to establish a pan-European research and innovation partnership with a focus on Eastern Europe. The Hungarian Presidency seeks to discuss the proposal for the initiative across four thematic areas – soil, freshwater, food systems, and biomanufacturing – and to adopt Council Conclusions. Additionally, the Hungarian Presidency plans to adopt Council Conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' special report regarding the effective delivery of food information to consumers.

FISHERIES The competitiveness of the European **aquaculture** sector is central to the fisheries priorities of the Hungarian Presidency. Given that aquaculture is the animal protein production sector with the smallest environmental footprint, it can play a key role in making food production more sustainable and at the same time, help mitigate the food sovereignty challenges caused by declining sea catches. In cooperation with Member States, the goal of the Hungarian Presidency is to develop a holistic and integrated approach that promotes the development of sustainable marine and freshwater aquaculture within the appropriate institutional framework. The topic will be on the agenda of the informal meeting of the Directors-General for Fisheries in July.

Setting total allowable catches (**TACs**) and **quotas for fish stocks for 2025** will also be a priority. During the negotiations, the Hungarian Presidency will focus on promoting environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable EU fisheries by setting volumes on a scientific basis.

Environment Council

SUSTAINABLE, HEALTHY AND COMEPTITIVE EUROPE In the field of climate and environment protection, the Hungarian Presidency's priority is to discuss the implementation of the objectives defined in the European Green Deal and the "Fit for 55" package, as well as to promote the transition to a green and climate-neutral, circular economy. Within this framework, our goals include contributing to the triple challenge of reducing pollution, mitigating climate change, and preserving biodiversity, in line with the EU Strategy for the Danube Region Action Plan. In addition to advancing and concluding ongoing negotiations, the Hungarian Presidency also intends to play a role in defining the European environmental and climate policy objectives for the next legislative cycle. Our Presidency is committed to addressing the adverse effects of climate change, preparing for the inevitable consequences, and strengthening resilience. We must think ahead and prepare for the future, not only for ourselves, but also for our future generations. While the Union excels in promoting sustainable development, protecting biodiversity and combating climate change, in addition



to addressing environmental challenges, prioritizing European competitiveness and fairness in greening the economy are becoming increasingly important. The use of our resources and emission reduction must be implemented in a way that allows us to simultaneously maintain economic growth.

The priorities of our Presidency are to contribute to a healthy and pollution-free environment, achieve progress in the transition to a circular economy, fight against climate change, and protect biodiversity in such a way that the EU does not lose its economic competitiveness.

CLIMATE POLICY The Hungarian Presidency attaches great importance to **the fight against climate change**. We are already facing the adverse effects of climate change, including extreme weather events such as floods, droughts and storms, which require urgent global action. Our aim is to contribute to maintaining the European Union's leading role in global climate policy by implementing the EU's nationally defined contribution and strengthening the level of global ambition.

The priority of the Hungarian Presidency is to contribute to the process of defining an ambitious, yet achievable, intermediate 2040 climate goal that guarantees that no citizen or Member State is left behind while ensuring the competitiveness and the security of energy supply of the EU throughout the green and just transition. We continue to support action in the mitigation of emissions, adaptation, and climate financing on the path towards climate neutrality while emphasizing the importance of strengthening resilience. At the same time, the Hungarian Presidency aims to closely monitor the implementation of the 2030 "Fit for 55" package as the cornerstone of achieving climate neutrality by 2050. In this context, the Hungarian Presidency strives to discuss the challenges and share good practices of the various Member States. We are firmly convinced that a successful green transition can only be achieved if it is backed by the support of citizens. Our Presidency therefore pays special attention to listening to the opinions of citizens and European stakeholders when formulating climate policy, in order to ensure that our climate policy efforts serve the interests of European people. The Hungarian Presidency is also committed to promoting smoother cooperation between the Member States and the European Commission on the **National Energy and Climate Plans**.

With a view to international involvement, one of the top priorities of the Hungarian Presidency is to adopt the COP29 Council conclusions that form the basis of the European position at the **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29)**. In representing the coordinated position of the EU and its Member States at COP29, the Hungarian Presidency will strive to put as much emphasis as possible on encouraging climate action by third countries, as well as to take into account the security aspects of climate change, and to facilitate that the conference delivers a tangible, ambitious, and realistic result.



During our Presidency, representing the EU and its Member States, as well as the Northern Mediterranean region, at the 16th session of the Meeting of Parties to the **UN Convention to Combat Drought and Desertification (UNCCD)** (CCD COP16) will also receive special attention. We are committed to advocating for the three Rio Conventions and their inseparable connections to environmental protection, as well as combating land degradation.

PROTECTION OF BIODIVERSITY The protection of biodiversity is one of the environmental pillars of the European Union. This plays an important role in providing food, fresh water and clean air, ensuring the balance of nature, helping to cope with the negative effects of climate change, and reducing the risk of epidemics.

During the Hungarian Presidency, a number of high-profile international events will take place in relation to **the preservation of biodiversity**, where the Presidency's task is to prepare, organise, and ensure the representation of the EU and its Member States. Of these, special mention must be made of the **16th session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP16)**. At CBD COP16, the Hungarian Presidency intends to do everything in its power to support the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, as well as to achieve progress with regard to such important topics as the Framework's monitoring and reporting system, the mobilization of resources for biological diversity conservation, and the establishment of a mechanism for ensuring fair and equitable benefit-sharing from the use of digital sequence information related to genetic resources.

A HEALTHY AND POLLUTANT-FREE ENVIRONMENT Pollution not only harms our health and the environment, but it is also a direct cause of the most serious illnesses and premature deaths, particularly, but not exclusively, among children, people suffering from certain diseases, and the elderly. Taking action against pollution is just as important as combating climate change or preserving biodiversity. For the Hungarian Presidency, the quantitative and qualitative protection of surface and underground waters, action against droughts, the sustainable use of available **water resources**, the provision of clean, healthy, and accessible drinking water and sanitation for all, as well as the development of resilient water management are also of particular importance.

As a result, during our Presidency we intend to take further steps towards the vision of zero pollution by 2050 through promoting ongoing negotiations on legislative proposals submitted during the current mandate of the Commission in order to minimize pollution. We aim to make significant progress on legislative proposals on microbeads, soil monitoring, priority substances in surface and groundwater, as well as the One Substance One Assessment (OSOA) package.

CIRCULAR ECONOMY The Hungarian Presidency pays special attention to promoting **circular economy**. The transition to a circular economy will reduce the pressure on natural resources and contribute to achieving climate neutrality and zero pollution goals, as well as addressing biodiversity loss. The circular economy offers



an answer to both the problems caused by waste generation and the unsustainable use of raw materials. The Presidency will do everything in its power to support the **increase of competitiveness and the protection of nature** in the European Union as a whole by encouraging reuse and developing a system of quality waste collection and utilization based on new, **innovative** solutions. When promoting the green transition, it is of crucial importance that the global competitiveness of European enterprises, especially micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises is not reduced. Therefore, it is necessary to aim for the adoption of targeted measures that lessen the difficulties of enterprises during the transition and promote more efficient access to solutions. During the negotiations of the Waste Framework Directive, our goal is to promote the prevention of food waste and to improve textile waste management and to achieve progress in the waste hierarchy by formulating new measures that prioritize the prevention of textile waste generation. The Hungarian Presidency primarily focuses on reaching a political agreement, that is, a final compromise text for the timely alleviation of the environmental burden caused by these two prominent waste-intensive sectors. In addition, the Hungarian Presidency will do everything in its power to promote an agreement on the End-of-Life vehicle regulation to create a sustainable and comprehensive legal framework for the automotive industry that will contribute to its competitiveness while also promoting its integration into the circular economy. Building on the achievements of the Belgian Presidency, we aim to achieve the greatest possible progress in the negotiations of the Green Claims Directive, which will help consumers make informed, sustainable decisions and act against "greenwashing", thus contributing to both environmental and consumer protection.

MAINTAINING THE LEADING ROLE OF THE EU IN GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION Apart from contributing to preserving the European leading role in the relevant international negotiations, the Hungarian Presidency continues to follow the EU-designated path of leading by example while focusing on the possibilities to most effectively exploit the opportunities of the green transition. The Hungarian Presidency intends to follow a holistic approach in order to explore synergies between different policy areas to promote greening the economy, ensure a level playing field, and foster European leading position in the global green technology market. Our Presidency continues to nurture and develop the Union's relations with its international partners on green initiatives and calls for increased global ambition.



Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council¹

Currently, the greatest employment challenge in the European Union is labour shortage, which affects practically all sectors and regions. This shortage has become a significant obstacle to business growth opportunities. To create a sustainable economy and maintain our competitiveness, more effective employment strategies are needed. Demographic trends also encourage Member States to promote labour market integration. A common goal is the implementation of EU-level employment policy commitments made in connection with the European Pillar of Social Rights and the further expansion of employment for the working-age population. Therefore, the Hungarian Presidency aims to focus on addressing labour shortages, involving available labour market reserves, and promoting a higher employment rate among the inactive working-age population.

Promoting work-life balance is essential to address the demographic and labour market challenges. Therefore, improving employment conditions and the working environment and improving the quality of employment will be a priority for the Presidency. Achieving equal opportunities and gender equality is a cross-sectoral policy objective. It is essential that women and men are given all the help they need to establish a **harmonious work-life balance**, and in this context, we also intend to address the issue of **mental health and intergenerational solidarity** and cooperation.

In the social field, the Hungarian Presidency will focus on the **social and economic integration of persons with disabilities**. With regard to **social inclusion**, we will concentrate on **access to quality services** in order to reduce territorial inequalities, in the general context of poverty reduction, the promotion of the implementation of the EU Roma Strategic Framework by Member States, and the more efficient use of EU funds.

In the area of health, following the coronavirus epidemic, particular attention must be devoted to the segments of **health policy** that have been neglected or where **necessary reforms have been delayed in the past**. The Hungarian Presidency intends to make progress in the negotiation of the **EU pharmaceutical package**, which could be one of the most ambitious commitments of Member States. Closely linked to both demographic and overall competitiveness priorities, the Presidency's health priority is **tackling cardiovascular disease and reflecting on organ transplantation**.

EMPLOYMENT POLICY Sustainable economic development and demographic trends both direct the focus of employment policies towards utilising labour reserves and supporting more efficient work. The goal of the Hungarian Presidency is **to address labour demand through the mobilisation of internal labour reserves and the effective deployment of the labour supply**. In this context, we intend to adopt Council Conclusions on the **untapped labour potential in the European Union**.

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Consumer protection issues are discussed by the Competitiveness Council.



We wish to place special emphasis on **improving the labour market integration of career starters**, as well as exploring and better exploiting the potential of combining work with studying and student employment. At the same time, we aim to address the challenges that **older generations** face to ensure that older workers can remain in the labour market if they wish, even by taking on a job in addition to a pension.

In order to expand employment and prevent labour shortages from becoming permanent, particularly in light of ongoing and upcoming technological transformations, **the Hungarian Presidency considers it crucial to preserve the ability of employees to work, activity levels and to support their adaptability.**

In order to develop the competencies required for new types of jobs and adapt to the evolving labour market, **it is essential that training programs reflecting these needs be accessible to a wide range of job seekers and employees.** Additionally, training structures must be able to respond quickly to changes. Employers play an important role in identifying the knowledge, skills, and competencies required by the workforce, which necessitates the development and support of **communication and active cooperation between education and training institutions and employers.**

Conditions of employment – including support for the spread of flexible forms of work and atypical employment to reconcile family and work, in particular to support parents with small children – **the workplace environment, and the quality of employment** are key to preserving the mental and physical health of employees. These factors are crucial in prolonging the active lifespan and are fundamental for increasing competitiveness and the capacity of society to provide for its members. To facilitate the entry of vulnerable social groups into the labour market, **the Hungarian Presidency aims to focus on issues related to employment security, the improvement of casual work conditions, and the fight against undeclared work.**

In order to achieve these goals, it is of paramount importance to strengthen the role of **public employment services** in meeting market needs and to enhance their personalised support and services that promote the activation of the labour force and their entry into and progress within the labour market.

In the area of EU actions, the Hungarian Presidency primarily seeks to promote and conclude the negotiation of new legislative initiatives that are currently on the agenda or expected to be tabled under the Hungarian Presidency. A key task is to **finalise the amendment of the directive on European Works Councils. We aim to continue the discussion of the “traineeships package”** (directive and Council recommendation) published at the end of March 2024. The EU social partners failed to reach an agreement on **the right to disconnect and on telework**, which is expected to be replaced by a **Commission proposal** before the end of 2024, which the Council will start negotiating in due course.

The Hungarian Presidency wishes to devote special attention to the topic of occupational health and safety for **the implementation of the European Occupational Health and Safety Framework Strategy for 2021–2027.** The



new (sixth) revision package of the directive on occupational safety limits for carcinogenic, mutagenic, and reprotoxic substances is expected to be published in September 2024. This will also prescribe occupational safety and health rules for cobalt, which is widely used in battery production.

In light of the results of the revision of the Commission due by 1 August 2024, the Hungarian Presidency wishes to contribute to the **evaluation of the implementation of the regulation establishing the European Labour Authority (ELA)** and to the performance of follow-up tasks. The Hungarian Presidency will monitor the developments of the annual cycle of the **European Semester** and, in the event of a Commission initiative, plans to discuss the revision of **employment guidelines**.

SOCIAL POLICY In the field of social policy, the Hungarian Presidency will give priority, on the one hand, to the **social integration of persons with disabilities** and, on the other, to **strengthening access to quality services** by reducing territorial inequalities in order to promote social inclusion. The Presidency also intends to take forward ongoing files during its term.

The Hungarian Presidency intends to address the issue of the **social integration of people with disabilities** in the form of Council Conclusions and a Presidency event, paying particular attention to the key issues of employment and rehabilitation, including occupational rehabilitation, and the possibilities of implementing reasonable accommodation. In the area of social inclusion, the Hungarian Presidency plans to adopt Council Conclusions on **strengthening access to quality services**, focusing on territorial inequalities and, also, the opportunities offered by the digital transition. In addition to the fight against poverty, the topic is also linked to the EU Roma Strategic Framework, and the preparation of the council conclusions will be supported by a Presidency event.

In addition, we would like to make further progress on the **revision of the social security coordination regulations**, a file on which no agreement has been reached despite the considerable efforts of the previous Presidencies.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND GENDER EQUALITY The Hungarian Presidency is particularly committed to promoting equal opportunities. Our aim is to advance ongoing negotiations on the draft directive on equal treatment (**Equal Treatment Directive**), which can be considered an extraordinary milestone in the application of the principle of equal treatment in terms of the EU.

In the area of gender equality, the Hungarian Presidency will seek to promote the reconciliation of work and family life, taking into account **intergenerational cooperation and solidarity**, in light of a shrinking population, an ageing society, and other demographic challenges affecting families. It will also pay particular attention to mental health issues, with a particular focus on women. The Hungarian Presidency intends to reflect on all these issues in the form of **Council Conclusions**.



HEALTH In the aftermath of the coronavirus epidemic, particular attention must be devoted to those segments of health policy that have been neglected or where necessary reforms have been delayed in the past. In the legislative field, the **EU pharmaceutical package** is of particular importance. The Hungarian Presidency intends to continue the negotiation process on this ambitious package of proposals in order to achieve as much progress as possible. The aim is to establish competitive, sustainable, and patient-centred pharmaceutical regulation.

The health policy priority of the Presidency is **action against cardiovascular disease**, with planned **Council Conclusions**. With the adoption of the SoHo Regulation, the Hungarian Presidency also intends to reflect on the **practical issues of organ donation** in the form of Council Conclusions. The issues will be reflected in the programmes of high-level conferences and in the informal EPSCO Council. During the Hungarian Presidency, we intend to allow room for discussion on other topics such as rare diseases, the links between mental health and various emergencies, or the possibilities for cooperation between Member States on the affordability of medicines.

Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council

In these areas, the Hungarian Presidency also aims to address the impact of demographic challenges and thereby strengthen European competitiveness. The educational priorities will focus on strategic partnerships and adaptation to the digital and green transition. The priority regarding youth empowerment and social inclusion will help young people in more isolated areas with fewer opportunities to thrive locally, while also addressing the demographic challenges that rural areas and young people are facing. In the field of culture, the Presidency will encourage strengthening the role of national and European culture in society and promote access thereto. In audiovisual media, emphasis will be placed on media literacy education for children. In the field of sport, the Hungarian Presidency will primarily focus on the promotion of healthy lifestyles and the legacy of major sporting events. This is in line with the long-term vision outlined in the framework of the European Model of Sport, which seeks to balance the social, educational, cultural and health-promoting role of sport and its function of strengthening social cohesion with the commercial economic interests of sport, while leaving space for grass-roots initiatives.

EDUCATION The educational priorities of the Hungarian Presidency are defined around current issues such as **competitive European higher education, adaptation to digital and green transition, and strategic partnerships in education and training**, which **must be promoted by tools of vocational training, higher education, and adult education**. On the latter topic, the Hungarian Presidency plans to adopt **Council Conclusions**. We intend to prioritise this topic in terms of European competitiveness and economic development. The Hungarian Presidency will be tasked with **negotiating the Higher Education Package**, which includes



recommendations focusing on a European quality assurance and recognition system, as well as on attractive and sustainable careers in higher education, and communication on a common European degree.

YOUTH In the framework of the **10th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue, focusing on the third European Youth Goal on Inclusive Societies as its overarching priority** and with an **emphasis on young people in rural areas**, the Hungarian Presidency aims to find solutions to help young people with fewer opportunities living in more isolated areas to thrive locally, devoting particular attention to their mental health and highlighting their strategic role in promoting the vision for the future of the European Union. In this context, **the Hungarian Presidency plans to table Council Conclusions on providing glocal opportunities for young people living in rural and remote areas.** Given that the EU Youth Dialogue was launched during the previous Spanish-Belgian-Hungarian Trio Presidency in 2010–2011, **it is timely to evaluate the 10 cycles so far and to formulate guidelines for the future.** Taking into account the results and lessons learned at the EU level, we wish to contribute to the promotion of a meaningful and genuine dialogue with young people and to this end **we intend to adopt a Council Resolution on the experiences accumulated during the 10th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue.** Furthermore, during the Hungarian Presidency, we **plan to adopt a Council Resolution on the Work Plan for the EU Youth Strategy 2025–2027**, which will set out the vision for the next two cycles of the EU Youth Dialogue.

CULTURE Strengthening cultural participation and the role of culture in society is one of the priorities of the European Work Plan for Culture 2023–2026 as well, and, in line with the overarching priority of addressing demographic challenges, the Hungarian Presidency intends to adopt **Council Conclusions on improving and fostering access to culture.** In this context, emphasis will be placed on the social, community-building, and mental health-preserving role of culture. We also intend to pay particular attention to the situation of **libraries** and their role in society.

In the field of cultural heritage protection, in line with the EU's Work Plan for Culture, we intend to promote digital access to cultural heritage and increase the number and visibility of cultural cooperation activities and projects. We attach particular importance to strengthening the resilience of cultural heritage and its protection against climate change as well as natural and man-made disasters.

We consider it necessary to explore the links between the high-quality architectural environment inherent in both the New European Bauhaus initiative and the restoration and renovation of the architectural heritage, and to exploit the synergies between the two. In the field of sustainability and building modernisation objectives, it is important that the approach of value-preserving renovation of the built cultural heritage is represented in the architectural policy objectives in line with the Bauhaus initiative.

AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA In the field of audiovisual media, we plan on placing significant emphasis on **media literacy education and improving the media awareness of children.** Our objective is to identify policy measures that can enhance media



literacy skills at both national and EU levels. We aim to assess where the gaps are based on the experiences of Member States and determine the intervention areas that can address these deficiencies.

SPORTS The Hungarian Presidency will primarily focus on the promotion of healthy lifestyles through sports. Furthermore, special attention will be given to the role of major sporting events to be organised in EU Member States, particularly the XXXIII. Summer Olympic Games (Paris 2024) and the XXV. Winter Olympic Games (Milano Cortina 2026), in the promotion of sports, as well as the legacy of major sporting events and their wider social, cultural and economic impact. Member States will have the opportunity to share their experience of organising major sporting events at a high-level conference. The Presidency also aims to adopt **Council Conclusions on the legacy of major sporting events**.

The priority of promoting healthy lifestyles resonates with the priority objective of the EU Sport Work Plan **to promote physical activity to maintain and improve health**, in which the wide-ranging effects of major sports events also play a role. Our priorities are also in line with the European framework for the long-term future of sport, the **European Sports Model**, which focuses on the role of sport in national identity, community building, and its social, educational, cultural and health-promoting functions. In this context, emphasis is also placed on the importance of anti-doping activities, as banned performance-enhancing substances pose a major threat to the health of athletes in both recreational and competitive sport. In contrast to the closed franchise model of sport in North American professional sport, which is predominantly driven by commercial and business interests, we will work under our Presidency to strengthen the traditional European model, characterised by a bottom-up approach, an open system of promotion and relegation, progression to European competitions based on domestic performance and results, and financial solidarity. Our aim is to balance the social and economic interests of sport, so our themes will include strengthening social empowerment and promoting access to sport for all.

Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council

In line with the goals of the European Digital Decade policy programme extended to 2030, the Hungarian Presidency aims to synthesise achievements and create a common platform for evaluating results, discussing future objectives, and mapping out the paths to achieve them in the fields of telecommunications, digitalisation, and cybersecurity.

To ensure the realisation of EU freedoms and more efficient cooperation among Member States, we will promote the use of IT solutions that support the enforcement of internal market regulations.



In telecommunications, we will focus on the future of the European telecommunications sector and the global dissemination of EU achievements. In the field of digitalisation, our focus will be on implementing the twin transition (green and digital) by emphasising the relationship between emerging technologies, European competitiveness, and sustainability. Among emerging technologies, particular attention will be given to artificial intelligence and preparing for the implementation of the AI Act at both the EU and national levels.

Continuing the community discussion on cybersecurity, we will pay particular attention to the cyber crisis management processes of the EU. Given the highly complex nature of the relevant EU regulatory environment, throughout our Presidency, we will review the key crisis management processes and summarize the related experiences.

In the field of energy, we believe it is important to ensure affordable, secure, and sustainable energy for EU industries and citizens, in line with the long-term goals of the Energy Union strategy. The aim of the Hungarian Presidency is to hold policy debates and exchange views on the state of the Energy Union, energy security, electricity grid development, the promotion of technology neutrality (nuclear energy), and geothermal energy.

TRANSPORT In the field of transport, we will pay particular attention to the **promotion of better connectivity**, both by geographically extending European networks and by creating better links between modes of transport, the **greening of the sector**, and the improvement of transport safety.

Improving connectivity, extending transport networks North-South and creating new intermodal hubs will contribute to economic development, it may result in improving transport links and economic integration between regions. These will also help to improve the competitiveness of transport, which will have a positive impact on both industrial development and the demographic challenges of rural depopulation. In respect of connectivity, the informal ministerial meeting on transport will focus on enhancing connectivity to the Western Balkans. We will promote better intermodal transport connections by discussing the revised **Passenger Rights Regulations (Omnibus Regulation)** and the **Multimodal Passenger Rights Regulation**.

The **greening of transport** can be promoted through the negotiation of the elements of the Greening Freight Transport package. These are meant to help improve **rail infrastructure management** (Railway Infrastructure Capacity Regulation), provide better information on **greenhouse gas emissions** from freight transport (CountEU Emission Regulation) and support the **shift from road freight to lower emission modes** (Combined Transport Directive). The negotiation of the revised Directive on **harmonised river information services (RIS)** for inland waterways in the Community will help increase the efficiency of transport flows by improving traffic and transport management in inland waterway transport.



To improve road safety, we will continue to negotiate the **Road Safety Package** as circumstances allow. The aim of the revision of the **Driving Licences Directive** and the **Directive on Driving Disqualifications** is, among others, to promote the use of mobile driving licences, update the conditions of physical and mental fitness for drivers, reduce administrative burden, develop stricter rules for holders of a recently obtained licence, extend the scope of driving disqualifications for serious traffic offences to the entirety of the EU, and contribute to sustainable transport and its digital transformation.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS The priorities related to telecommunications throughout the Hungarian Presidency will include the discussion on **the future of the European telecommunications sector**. This includes adopting **Council conclusions that reflect on the white paper of the European Commission** and reviewing the experiences gained from numerous legislative and policy initiatives in recent years.

We will continue the initiatives commenced by the Belgian Presidency on the external dimension of European digital policies and **digital diplomacy**, placing significant emphasis on coordinating the actions of the Union in relevant international organisations and ensuring a coordinated approach by Member States.

To advance **European and international standardization activities**, the Hungarian Presidency aims to showcase and better understand the work of European organisations involved in telecommunications standardisation. These preparations will support coordinated actions at the ITU **World Telecommunication Standardisation Assembly (WTSA-24)** scheduled for October.

We plan to strengthen ties with the **Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC)** by organising a conference on the future of the telecommunications sector. This event will include bringing together leaders of telecommunications regulatory authorities, telecom attachés, and industry players.

Additionally, one of the objectives of the Hungarian Presidency is to **continue work related to the inclusion of third countries in the roaming area**, particularly with Ukraine and Moldova. Efforts will also be made to bring Georgia and the Western Balkan countries closer to the EU roaming area. By intensifying efforts to reduce roaming charges between the EU and the Western Balkan region, we can promote the European integration of the region and further bridge the gap between the citizens of the EU and those of the regions in question.

DIGITALISATION The priority of the Hungarian Presidency in the field of digitalisation is to facilitate a joint European-level **discussion on emerging technologies and their potential impact on competitiveness and sustainability**. The agenda will also include an evaluation of the implementation of the **Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act**. Additionally, we will focus on the preparations for the **implementation of the AI Act** by initiating consultations and exchanges of experience through thematic events.



The European Digital Identity Regulation (“eIDAS 2”), the Interoperable Europe Act, and the Single Digital Gateway Regulation are particularly important for enabling and enhancing cross-border digital public services. We will initiate measures to support their implementation, involving Member States and the European Commission. Through a series of thematic events, we will explore measures for digital policy implementation and explore ways to make governance models more effective.

POSTAL SERVICES The Hungarian Presidency aims to present the study of the Commission on the necessity of revising the Postal Services Directive at a working party meeting, which is scheduled for release in October. If necessary, we will also organise a workshop to discuss the findings and implications of the study.

CYBERSECURITY The Hungarian Presidency is committed to continuing the community dialogue for high-level European cybersecurity. In light of the anticipated review of the Cybersecurity Act, we intend to conduct a comprehensive debate to ensure coherence in the EU regulatory framework.

Since the publication of the Commission’s recommendation on coordinated response to large-scale cybersecurity incidents and crises in 2017, numerous EU actions have been undertaken in this area, though they do not necessarily present a comprehensive overview. Therefore, it is timely to conduct another horizontal discussion, potentially laying the groundwork for the review of the 2017 recommendation.

In the external dimension of cybersecurity (cyber diplomacy), we aim to emphasize the importance of shared situational awareness and focus on capacity building in the Western Balkans.

ENERGY **Geothermal energy** is considered as a priority under the Hungarian Presidency, as making it more widespread may play a key role in ensuring energy autonomy and security as well as in meeting climate goals. The Hungarian Presidency plans to adopt Council Conclusions on the promotion of geothermal energy and reducing related financing risks in the context of the decarbonisation of the energy sector. We consider it important that consumers in the internal market are guaranteed affordable energy prices for all energy sources, which is one of the most important contributors to the EU’s competitiveness. Nuclear energy is one of the pillars of the success of the green transition, and the Hungarian Presidency will support initiatives in this area. In order to strengthen energy security, the Hungarian Presidency will support the promotion of access to targeted EU funding for natural gas infrastructure projects that enhance source and route diversification. With regard to the Regulation on the governance of the **Energy Union** and climate action, together with State of the Energy Union report, we plan to have discussions in multiple fora on the implementation of the energy policy objectives in the National Energy and Climate Plans of the Member States and the “Fit for 55” package, focusing on decarbonisation, energy security, renewable energy, energy efficiency, competitiveness and R&D, for the assessment of progress. The Hungarian Presidency will also host several high-level EU energy policy events, including the SET (Strategic Energy Technology) Plan



conference planned for autumn 2024. Furthermore, the Hungarian Presidency will devote particular attention to **electricity grid development** in order to enhance the security of supply, with policy debates on the issue.

Competitiveness Council

The European Council called for decisive action to ensure the long-term global competitiveness of the European Union, which is capable of achieving this objective through an integrated approach across policy areas. Stimulating economic growth, improving productivity and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises are essential elements of long-term economic stability. Facilitating the digital transition and ensuring labour market flexibility are key to building a competitive European economy. The overarching priority of the Hungarian Presidency is to strengthen European competitiveness. The issue should be addressed in a horizontal manner, involving EU business operators in the consultations, with a view to establishing a New European Competitiveness Deal.

INTERNAL MARKET The internal market is the engine of economic growth in the European Union, contributing to the well-being of its citizens. One of the objectives of the Hungarian Presidency is to follow up on the conclusions of the comprehensive report on the future of the internal market by Enrico Letta and to set a course of action. In parallel with our efforts on the internal market, we also intend to play an active role in the discussion and follow-up of Mario Draghi's upcoming report on the future of European competitiveness.

The pandemic, the energy crisis, and rising commodity prices have led to an increase in the number of late payments, and the resulting liquidity problems have made economic relations between both domestic and cross-border businesses more strained. As regards the **revision of the Late Payment Directive**, the Hungarian Presidency aims to agree on a general approach in respect of the proposed amendment and to start trilogue negotiations with the EP.

INDUSTRIAL POLICY The Hungarian Presidency wishes to embrace the need for a new, common industrial strategy with the broad involvement of industry players. In this context, we intend to explore the need for targeted, European-level intervention to strengthen the competitiveness of businesses.

In order to maintain the development of the European automotive industry, putting essential measures on the agenda that support the market for electric vehicle production will be of utmost importance during the Hungarian Presidency, taking into account the European climate goals, the significant impact of European production on EU growth, and the growth of the internal market for electric cars.



The European manufacturing ecosystem of net-zero energy technologies should be reinforced, including by stimulating investment, facilitating market access for new technologies and implementing skills and innovation programmes.

A skilled workforce is key to ensuring successful transition, supporting the competitiveness of European industry, and creating quality jobs.

Efforts to ensure secure and adequate access to clean energy at competitive prices in the internal market will be central to better positioning the industrial strengths of the EU during the transition.

The Hungarian Presidency intends to address the issue of new technologies with a horizontal, cross-industry approach. The development of a technology-neutral industrial strategy requires continuous consultation with industry players.

SME POLICY Micro, small, and medium-size enterprises play a key role in boosting European economic performance and have significant job creation potential. At the same time, the economic difficulties of recent years have highlighted their exposure to supply chains and their difficulties in managing the energy crisis. Continuing the work started by the trio partners, **the Hungarian Presidency is also committed to developing SMEs and making them more resilient to crises, reducing their additional burdens, improving the quality of the related regulations, and introducing supporting measures.**

STATE AID POLICY Due to the crises of recent years, the State aid framework has changed. The aim of the Hungarian Presidency is to initiate a debate about reconsidering State aid rules in order to protect European competitiveness and healthy industrial development.

COMPANY LAW With regard to company law, the Hungarian Presidency will continue negotiations on the proposal for a directive on European cross-border associations.

TOURISM In the field of tourism, **digitalisation and data-driven governance** will be at the heart of the presidential programme, in line with the efforts towards a common European data space. Another key theme will be to **increase the role of family-friendly, multi-generational tourism** among Member States, which is also an important contributor to the long-term sustainability of the sector. In addition, we will actively work on **reviewing and improving the framework conditions for tourism businesses and making these conditions transparent, reducing the burden on companies** and developing a single database of tourism services.

CONSUMER PROTECTION The development of digitalisation has prompted the **revision of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Directive**. The Hungarian Presidency aims to take the file forward. With regard to the **revision of the Package Travel Directive** – amended in response to the mass cancellation of package travels due to the Coronavirus pandemic – the Hungarian Presidency aims to agree on a General Approach and begin trilogue negotiations with the Parliament.



TECHNICAL HARMONISATION In the field of technical harmonisation, a key objective is to preserve the global competitiveness of EU companies, reduce administrative burden caused by legislation with special regard to the interests of SMEs and to strengthen the internal market for safe products while maintaining compliance with the new legislative framework, particularly by ensuring the evolving quality of conformity assessment, accreditation, standardisation, and market surveillance procedures. Additionally, improving the quality of life of EU citizens, establishing the right to a sustainable and safe environment, and guaranteeing affordable mobility are important goals of the Hungarian Presidency. Concerning the spread of new technologies due to technical development, it is important to prepare both the economy and consumers for their application and to increase awareness of the risks inherent in these technologies. The Hungarian Presidency focuses on achieving these objectives during the discussions on the **Toy Safety Regulation**, aiming to enhance the protection of children against risks presented by toys while also strengthening the EU market for safe toys, and on the review of the **Regulation on Detergents and Surfactants**, which aims to simplify the rules and reduce regulatory burden on manufacturers, taking into account new innovative products and practices, such as the sale of detergents and surfactants in refillable forms. The Hungarian Presidency aims to achieve significant progress in these files. The implementation of the **EU Standardisation Strategy** contributes to the development of European standardisation and its more efficient and effective application. Hungary considers the coordination of industrial and standardisation policies important for enhancing the competitiveness of the internal market and industry.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY Intellectual property rules that stimulate innovation play a key role in boosting the competitiveness of European businesses, while a predictable licensing environment for IP rights is indispensable for the widespread uptake of new technologies. In order to promote these objectives, the Hungarian Presidency intends to achieve the greatest possible progress in the negotiations of the EU **patent package**, in particular with regard to the legislative proposals on the Supplementary Protection Certificate for medicinal products, which will improve the competitiveness of the EU pharmaceutical industry.

RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION It is critically important to strengthen the global positions of European science, research, and innovation and to re-establish the EU as a major player in the innovation and technological competition. In line with this, the overarching priority of the Hungarian Presidency is to enhance European competitiveness, and the improvement of the effectiveness of European research and innovation ecosystems is a fundamental tool in this respect. This requires addressing the deficiencies in the functioning of the European innovation system. Among these deficiencies, it is particularly crucial to **address the fragmentation of the European Research and Innovation Area and to reduce the innovation gap**. To examine and discuss the effectiveness of the measures and initiatives taken so far (e.g. Widening) to reduce the innovation gap, and to determine the future direction of the European Research Area (ERA), we have a number of initiatives planned: we will connect this topic with the evaluation of the ERA policy agenda for 2022–2024 and with the Draghi report on the future of EU



competitiveness as well as the report on the implementation of the New European Innovation Agenda. We plan to negotiate Council Conclusions based on this major R&I priority. **In addition to this strategic goal, we also plan to adopt two more Council Conclusions related to R&I during the Hungarian Presidency:** on the one hand, we will examine the possibility of establishing a new innovation and research partnership on the circular bioeconomy, focusing on Central and Eastern European countries, including the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership countries. On the other hand, we also plan to adopt Council Conclusions regarding advanced materials, which will respond to the Communication of the Commission, published on 27 February 2024.

SPACE To ensure a coherent EU-wide approach on the regulation of space operations and to build on the joint communication on the EU approach to space traffic management, the Hungarian Presidency plans to conduct intensive negotiations following the presentation of the **EU Space Law**. In addition to protecting national security interests, the legislative proposal could provide a framework for collectively increasing the resilience of space systems and services across the EU as well as coordination between Member States, including, where appropriate, remote strategic ground infrastructure locations, such as the outermost regions of the EU. In addition, it is essential to ensure that the European Union's resilience is enhanced by developing a regulatory framework that strengthens its competitiveness across the entire spectrum of the European space ecosystem. In line with this priority, we plan to adopt Council Conclusions on the mid-term review of the EU space programme and on reinforcing European competencies in the space sector.



