Priorities for Lithuania’s EU Presidency
The first Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council has set itself an ambitious and targeted agenda for making Europe more credible, growth-oriented, open and effective. Strongly supporting those priorities, Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists (LPK), as the voice of Lithuanian industry, business and employers, identifies a number of key areas that the entire EU needs to act upon to set Europe back on the path of competitiveness, growth and jobs.
It is imperative to restore confidence in the European economy and in the ability of the EU and Member States to create conditions for sustainable growth and job creation. Member States need to implement the ambitious structural reforms that will serve as a solid foundation for long-term growth and employment.

Coupled with structural reforms, the EU should use the multiannual financial framework (MFF) to its fullest potential. The EU’s budget has the potential for targeted investment in cross-border infrastructure, research and innovation. The Council and the Parliament need to take a longer-term view and agree on an MFF that invests in Europe’s future, focusing on growth, competitiveness and boosting employment.

The euro should be further strengthened by implementing the measures the Member States agreed in the field of governance and supervision. This is especially important given Lithuania’s strong determination to become a member of the euro area.
With the growing strength of emergent economies, it is important that the EU’s industry increases its competitiveness and an essential part of this is a forward-looking and integrated Industrial Policy.

The right conditions for investment and innovation in Europe include smart regulation, unfettered access to energy resources and raw materials, access to finance and governments’ determination to implement structural reforms in areas such as taxation and labour market.

We need a flexible and responsive labour market that supplies the right skills. The issue of education system reforms is of paramount importance.

For these policy objectives to be effective, they must be translated into practice with EU and Member State policies.
The Commission has recommitted itself to the Single Market through the release of Single Market Acts I and II, and this commitment needs to be carried through by the Lithuanian Presidency.

A well-functioning integrated Single Market is the premier source of the EU’s economic success and its global competitiveness and we need to unlock its full growth potential.

Key to fully leveraging the Single Market’s benefits is the elimination of remaining barriers to the four fundamental freedoms that still exist in practice. An essential element that needs attention is infrastructure and improving the missing interconnections between Member States. Beyond closing the gaps, more must be devoted to ensuring that Member States and institutions properly transpose, implement and enforce Single Market rules.
A fully interconnected and well-functioning internal energy market is vital for the EU’s competitiveness. Similarly, a stable and predictable legislative framework is indispensable for companies wanting to invest in Europe. Therefore, the EU must ensure that policy frameworks are fit for purpose and able to move Europe toward energy and climate policies that reinforce competitiveness, energy security and sustainability.

Effective external relations, better coordination of national energy policies and enforcement of already agreed legislation are needed to ensure industry and consumers have access to energy at competitive prices.

More must be done to eliminate existing energy islands where functioning of the Single Market, as well as competitive energy prices, diversification and decarbonisation scenarios, are virtually impossible. A reliable and affordable energy supply is essential for maintaining a competitive industry in Europe.

Therefore, we urgently need timely decisions and coordinated action on all levels for the development of electricity, gas and LNG infrastructure and interconnections aimed at diversification of routes, sources and competitive energy prices. EU also needs to explore and exploit potentially advantageous unconventional energy resources such as shale gas.
The EU must pursue trade policies that will enhance the competitiveness of the European economy. This includes effective access to third country markets, strategic relations with key trade partners and fighting protectionism. Furthermore, the EU should use available instruments and contacts with trading partners to ensure the enforcement of international commitments.

The EU should advance relations with Eastern Europe and the United States. Given on-going negotiations for agreements with Eastern Partnership countries, we trust that the Presidency will use its geographic position and historical relationships with these countries to push for successful conclusion and bring them closer to the EU. Business will play its role by organising the Eastern Partnership Business Forum in Vilnius on 28 November and providing recommendations to the decision makers at the Eastern Partnership Summit.

In addition, the negotiations for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership begin during the Lithuanian Presidency. The transatlantic economy brings many benefits to Europe and this agreement holds the promise of not only increased trade between the EU and the US, but also could serve as a blueprint for other international trade and investment agreements.
For more than two decades, the Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists (LPK) has been an advocate of business and industry at both national and international level. The LPK strives to consolidate the business position in parliamentary acts and government resolutions, documents issued by the ministries and EU legislation, and seeks prevent the adoption of anti–business legislation that is harmful to economic development. Business interests are the focal point of the LPK. As the protector of companies, the LPK is the business voice of Lithuania.

By implementing its remit and tackling the various tasks, the LPK has over the years built up ongoing and business–like relations with state authorities. It has become a universally recognised social partner for the authorities and trade unions. It has gained recognition abroad as a member of international industry and business organisations, such as BUSINESSEUROPE and the International Congress of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (ICIE).

Some facts about LPK

- The LPK brings together 42 branch and 9 regional business and industry associations, and is growing
- It speaks on behalf of over 2700 medium and large–sized enterprises
- LPK members employ over 30% of the Lithuanian work force
- LPK companies generate almost 60% of Lithuanian GNP
- Number one business advocate (lobbyist) in Lithuania (based on a survey by magazine “Veidas”, 2011)
- More than 150 local and international conferences since 2000
- More than 40 business missions to more than 40 countries since 2000
- More than 50 position papers to the state institutions annually