ON 1 JULY 2016, SLOVAKIA WILL TAKE OVER THE PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION FOR THE FOLLOWING SIX MONTHS.

This will be the first time Slovakia takes the helm of the Council of the EU since joining the bloc in 2004. Preceded by the Netherlands, it will begin its turn within the Trio Presidency until Malta takes over in January 2017. While adhering to the Trio’s approach for the January 2016 – June 2017 period, Slovakia will be primarily concerned with the political challenges facing the EU, particularly in the wake of the UK’s EU referendum.

Slovakia is embarking on this endeavour a little over three months after its own general election, which has raised some questions over the newly-formed coalition’s stability. The government has thus far quelled these fears by stepping-up efforts and devoting considerable resources to the Presidency’s preparation and successful execution.

While aware of its novice status, Slovakia will take over the EU Presidency at a time when political instability requires strong leadership. Sustainable economic recovery, the migration crisis and the Brexit fallout are just some of the challenges that will need to be tackled.

Over the coming weeks in particular, as the dust settles and the actual Brexit consequences take shape, several procedures will determine how the new UK’s role in Europe will unfold. For now, the extent to which the EU-UK negotiations
could eventually overshadow the Presidency’s agenda remains to be seen. In the meantime, Slovakia is likely to steer through the Council’s self-reflection process on how to strengthen the European project.

Within this context, Slovakia's emphasis on rebuilding citizens’ trust in the EU could prove timely. In a bid to pursue this, the Presidency will be guided by three interlinked principles: achieving concrete results, overcoming fragmentation, and assuming a citizen-centric focus.

In adopting its overall approach to the Presidency agenda, Slovakia has two ultimate objectives in mind: firstly, bringing forward a positive agenda that fosters the EU internal market and the added value it brings to both the European economy and its citizens; secondly, helping the EU shift from a prolonged crisis management mode to more long-term, sustainable solutions. These stated goals will possibly be an indication of how the country plans on approaching the latest, and likely most serious, in a series of crises facing the EU bloc.

Overall, the Presidency’s priorities will pivot around the themes of:

1. An economically-stronger EU,
2. Modernising the Internal Market,
3. Sustainable migration and asylum policies,
4. A globally-engaged Europe.

Please find below a more detailed analysis of the Slovak Presidency’s priorities across different policy areas.
Financial services and taxation

A central focus for the Slovak Presidency will be boosting investments and identifying hurdles for businesses accessing capital, particularly in Central and Eastern Member States. Following the European Commission’s first assessment from 1 June, the review of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) will play an important role in these efforts, with the Presidency committed to better streamlining its implementation and free up capital for more innovative projects. Another important dimension of these efforts will be the midterm review of the EU budget and activities to deepen the Capital Markets Union (CMU). Here, the Presidency’s ambition is to improve communications to the general public as well as Member State governments.

With regards to the main files on the table, in September Slovakia is expected to kick off trialogue negotiations on modernising the Prospectus Directive so as to help improve access to capital markets for companies. While the Council agreed on its position regarding the draft regulation in June, the Parliament has yet to do so, thereby delaying the negotiations. In July, Slovakia will also begin negotiating with the Parliament on the Commission’s draft regulation on money market funds, after some delays in Council. However, with the UK government having played a key role in reaching a preliminary agreement at Council level, the negotiations are unlikely to move ahead as swiftly as expected, following the result of the UK referendum. Likewise, the resignation of the Parliament Rapporteur on the dossier will cause further delays.

With regard to the new EU Securitisation rules, the Presidency’s ambition is to begin trialogues in September. This however appears to be unlikely as the Parliament has taken a more cautious approach and is expected to agree on its stance only by the end of the year.

The Slovak Presidency will also continue to make progress on the actions listed under the first phase of the Five Presidents’ report presented at the June 2015 European Council. Focus will be on strengthening the second pillar of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and particularly completing the Banking Union. The latter will concern overseeing the transposition of the Bank Resolution and Recovery Directive and implementing the Single Resolution Mechanism (SRM). As a Eurozone member, strengthening the fiscal capacity of the Euro area will also be a key priority for the Presidency, together with reinforcing the social dimension of the EMU. The Presidency will also attempt to advance discussions on the third pillar of the Banking Union, consisting of the Commission’s proposal for a European Deposit Insurance Scheme (EDIS) tabled in November 2015 and currently at a standstill in Council.

RELEVANT DATES:

11 July Eurogroup
12 July Slovak Presidency Conference on Insolvency
12 July ECOFIN Council
9 September Eurogroup
9-10 September Informal ECOFIN Council
10 October Eurogroup
11 October ECOFIN Council
7 November Eurogroup
8 November ECOFIN Council
5 December Eurogroup
6 December ECOFIN Council
The Presidency will actively engage in the consultation process ahead of the Commission’s White Paper on Stage 2 proposals for completing the EMU, including setting up a High Level Expert Group. The new regulatory measures developed in cooperation with the Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM), expected to be published in November, will also fall on Slovakia’s plate. Alongside launching Council discussions on further harmonising the supervisory framework, the Presidency will be tasked with starting negotiations on future insolvency law.

In terms of new legislation, the Slovak Presidency will also begin examining the revision of the European Venture Capital Fund (EuVeca) and the European Social Entrepreneurship Fund (EuSEF) Regulations, expected to be presented by the Commission before the summer holidays. In fact, venture capital will be one of the main topics to be discussed at their first ECOFIN Informal Council meeting. A key priority will also be tackling terrorist financing, where the Presidency will begin the examination of a new Anti-Money Laundering Directive (AMLD) expected to be published by the Commission in July, together with new measures on transparency of corporate structures.

With regard to taxation, the Slovak Presidency will continue to work on the 2015 Action Plan on a Fairer and Efficient Corporate Tax System. Additionally, Slovakia will also address the Commission’s anti-tax avoidance package presented in January 2016. With proposals touching upon sensitive topics such as the listing process of non-cooperative tax jurisdictions as well as public country-by-country reporting of income tax information for multinational enterprises, making progress on these files is likely to pose some challenges.

Slovakia will also aim to adopt Council Conclusions on the Commission’s VAT Action Plan, a crucial initiative aiming to reduce the VAT gap in the EU, and provide policy direction to the future reform of the EU’s disjointed VAT regime. Discussions will continue on temporary VAT derogations (reverse charge mechanism) while significant attention will be also given to other upcoming policy and legislative proposals in the Action plan. These include a legislative proposal on e-publications and VAT obstacles to cross-border e-commerce as well as possible measures to strengthen tax administrations’ capacity.

Energy

In line with the Commission’s call to deliver on the Energy Union Strategy in 2016, and following up on the work launched by the Netherlands, the Slovak Presidency has also prioritised progress in this area with a particular focus on the “Energy security, solidarity and trust” dimension of the Strategy.
Given the legislative dossiers currently being discussed in the Council, and the concerns over security of supply, the Slovak Presidency will drive on-going talks regarding the review of the Regulation on security of gas supply, and the review of the Decision on the information exchange mechanism for intergovernmental agreements. Depending on the maturity of these discussions in Council and in the European Parliament, the Slovak Presidency will aim to open negotiations with the European Parliament and the Commission so as to achieve a compromise on both.

The legislative process on security of supply may be influenced by the institutional oversight of the Nord Stream II project. Moreover, it could be expected for Slovakia to also invest significant efforts in further developing international relations as they affect the EU’s energy field. In this respect, Slovakia aims to initiate a review of the external dimension of the Energy Union and, accordingly, present a policy paper on the issue during its term.

Energy security questions in the context of the EU LNG and Storage Strategy, among other issues, will be discussed during the informal Energy Council meeting on 13 July in Bratislava. Furthermore, the second State of the Energy Union as well as the subject of EU energy policy in the context of external relations are due to be discussed during an Energy Council meeting on 5 December 2016.

Moreover, the Slovak Presidency will prepare the basis for Council debates on the new Governance Framework for the Energy Union, also due to be published by the end of the year. This topic will surely trigger lively debates in the Council as it will set up the structure for Member States’ contributions to the 2030 objectives. The new governance for the Energy Union and accompanying financing framework needed in order to achieve the EU Climate and Energy objectives will be discussed during an informal meeting of the EU Energy and Environment ministers on 12 July.

Noteworthy, in light of the UK referendum results, a key contributor to the EU energy discussions might soon be missing from the new Governance architecture, and this political instability may change the vision for the Energy Union.

Slovakia will also initiate discussions on the Energy Efficiency Package, including the review of the Directives on Energy Efficiency and on the Energy Performance of Buildings, the publication of both being expected in September. If the calendar allows, the Slovak Presidency could also kick off the discussions on the Renewable Energy Package, which will include reviewing the Renewable Energy Directive as well as new proposals on sustainability criteria for bioenergies, expected for December.

Finally, since all negotiating mandates will already be adopted during Slovakia’s
term, the Presidency will be in a position to commence trialogue negotiations with Parliament on reviewing the Directive on Energy Efficiency Labelling.

**Digital economy and society**

As the European Commission prepares to publish by year end the last of its 16 remaining initiatives needed to complete the Digital Single Market (DSM), the Slovak Presidency will be faced with a large number of complex files. This will require an important change of pace from the Dutch Presidency, whose achievements were limited by the small number of concrete files available and by divisions amongst Member States as to policy direction. The latter – laid bare when two letters were sent to the Commission by a similar group of Northern, Central and Baltic Member States promoting a light touch approach to platforms and the need for a free flow of data – is likely to continue to characterise Council decision-making on these issues during the Slovak Presidency and beyond.

To focus its efforts, the Slovak Presidency has identified three main priorities for its mandate. First, it aims to conclude the legislative process on the proposal for a Regulation on cross-border portability of online content services, pending Parliament’s timely adoption of its Report. Second, Slovakia has the ambition of reaching a general approach among Member States on the geo-blocking proposal. Finally, the Presidency hopes to ensure maximum progress on the wholesale roaming review, thereby enabling the full implementation of the Telecom Single Market Regulation. Slovakia will also seek the swift adoption of Council Conclusions on the e-Government Action Plan.
Beyond these, the Commission is expected to present an ambitious overhaul of the telecoms regulatory framework before the end of the third quarter. On this hotly debated reform – aiming to achieve a balance between infrastructure investment and competition, while potentially departing from tech neutrality – the Slovak Presidency should only have time to set up the groundwork for the ensuing Maltese term. On spectrum, the Slovak Presidency will be able to build on the Dutch’s achievements in securing a general approach on freeing up the 700 MHz spectrum band for mobile, and hopes to conclude trilogue negotiations by year-end.

In the media and content sector, the Slovak Presidency is expected to kick off the debate on the review of the audiovisual media services rules, put forward by the Commission in June and whose proposed minimum share of European content on on-demand platforms is already generating extensive debate.

Additionally, Slovakia should be able to initiate Council discussions on the much-awaited Copyright reform, including a review of the Satellite and Cable Directive, which the Commission should present after the telecoms reform.

Although Slovakia aims to achieve significant progress on the e-Commerce files, notably geo-blocking, it recognises the challenge of reaching a Council compromise on the cross-border parcel delivery proposal, in terms of handling different national expectations on price transparency vs. price regulation. On online platforms, the Slovak Presidency agreed to devote a meeting of Telecoms Ministers to discussing the appropriate approach to this topic before the end of the year. With regards to digital contract rules, Bratislava will struggle to keep the two existing proposals within a single package. While a Council partial general approach on the supply of digital content should be reached by the end of its mandate, the Slovak Presidency appears less confident in its ability to secure the same outcome on the online sales of goods, a proposal seen as less ambitious by Member States.

Finally, the European Commission is expected to table the Free Flow of Data initiative, the review of the ePrivacy Directive and the aforementioned proposal on VAT for e-Commerce during the last two months of the Slovak Presidency’s mandate. While the latter may dedicate some of its precious time and resources to these files, Malta will be left to kick off the negotiations during its term.

**Environment**

An overall objective of the Slovak Presidency in environmental policy is to contribute to the EU’s transition towards a circular economy. The four
legislative proposals on waste, that are part of the Circular Economy Package, will remain as key environmental dossiers in the Council. Taking over from the Netherlands, the Slovak Presidency will have to deal with the more political and, by default, sensitive parts of the proposals. Although political agreement is unlikely to be reached by December 2016, the Council Environment Working Party will gather twice a month in an effort to build a solid consensus for negotiating with the Parliament. In December, the Presidency aims to present a progress report that will be discussed during a public debate.

Also stemming from the Circular Action Plan, the Fertilisers Regulation was proposed by the Commission in March 2016. The Environment Working Group has started analysing the text while Member States have presented scrutiny observations, signalling that in-depth conversations should begin under the Slovak lead. Due to its technical nature, this file is unlikely to be agreed upon towards the end of the year.

As for bioeconomy, the Slovak Presidency foresees two major conferences. First, a high-level international conference on transitioning to a green economy, taking place in Bratislava in September. This event aims at identifying policy options and priorities that could help foster this shift. Second, the Bratislava Bioeconomy Conference BBEC2016 being organised by the Slovak Presidency and the European Commission in October. Here, national and regional stakeholders will exchange views and experience on the potential of the new bioeconomy in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, including how to best adapt the strategy in light of both regional barriers and research and innovation opportunities. The policy opinions gathered during these deliberations might feed into the upcoming Bioeconomy Strategy revision.

Although no new Commission initiatives are expected in relation to water, the Slovak Presidency wishes to put the topic of water scarcity and the problem of floods on the Council agenda. To this end, the Environment Ministers will gather for an informal meeting in Bratislava in July, so as to reflect on water-related issues and identify policy priorities and challenges in this field. This will feed into draft Council conclusions that will be discussed during the October Environment Council.

Last but not least, the Slovak Presidency may have to continue the trialogue negotiations on the revised National Emissions Ceiling Directive should the Dutch Presidency fail to reach a first reading agreement by the end of their term.
Climate

At a critical moment for the EU's climate policy, the Slovak Presidency is taking over from the Netherlands - an experienced Member State that granted a great deal of importance to this policy area. At the same time, Slovakia will have to deal with the fallout of a crisis precipitated by the UK's vote to leave the EU. Not only has progress on several key climate dossiers been put into question, but the UK withdrawing makes advocating in favour of the 2030 greenhouse gas emissions target during EU debates uncertain.

In the area of climate, Slovakia aims to continue the work started as a follow-up to the 21st Climate Conference in Paris (COP21). In doing so, Slovakia must shepherd a series of significant climate debates as well as help prepare the EU's position ahead of the next UNFCCC COP22 in Marrakesh – an important COP for fleshing out the practicalities of the Paris Agreement. In normal circumstances, Council Conclusions would be expected during the October Council. However, the Brexit decision could have an impact here, since former UNFCCC Executive Secretary Christina Figueres had stated that, with the UK out of the picture, the EU would have to recalibrate its submission to Paris. The question has been posed as to whether this would mean that the whole Paris Agreement would need to be rewritten.

A key dossier and the most complex negotiations will likely revolve around reforming the EU's Emissions Trading System (ETS), where the Dutch Presidency has started discussions on the essential topics. Nevertheless, there are still major areas to cover at Working Party level. There seems to be some agreement that the EU ETS should reflect the 2014 European Council Conclusions on the 2030 Energy and Climate Package, but questions remain as to whether there could be amendments to align it with the Paris Agreement.

However, no consensus has yet been reached on the controversial ideas to reconfigure the carbon leakage regime, for example through tiering. Given the importance of the funding mechanisms, the Slovaks are planning a joint informal discussion with Environment and Energy Ministers on the Modernisation Fund on 12 July. Again, Brexit has already triggered major issues, with the ETS allowance price nose-diving following the referendum results, and UK MEP Dr Ian Duncan (ECR, UK) tendering his resignation as Rapporteur on this dossier for the European Parliament's Environment Committee. It is still unclear as to how the Council and the Parliament will proceed. At this stage, it appears unlikely that the Slovak Presidency would be able to achieve substantial progress on this file.

RELEVANT DATES:

11-12 July Informal Environment Council
13 July Slovak Presidency informal Workshop on Climate Change
14 October Environment Council
19 December Environment Council
Another key issue will be the **Energy Union Governance Framework**, which the Commission is due to present towards the end of this year. This is expected to further outline the contours of Member States’ national energy and climate plans, which will be essential to delivering the 2030 Energy and Climate framework by setting the parameters for Member States’ compliance on EU goals, such as the EU wide target for renewables. The Slovak Presidency plans to hold an initial discussion at the Informal Environment Council in July to prepare the Council input.

In addition, it is not yet clear whether the Commission will immediately present the non-ETS climate policies due in principle for 20 July. A key priority for the Slovaks is to kick off discussions on these topics, with priority allocated to reviewing **the Effort Sharing Decision**. The latter will be at the core of a dedicated public debate within the Environment Council in October, which will include the proposal on how to cover forests in the EU’s climate policies known as LULUCF (Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry).

The Slovak Presidency’s work in this field will likely present an interesting stance since the country has traditionally been rather sceptical of ambitious climate policies. As a member of the Visegrad Group, Slovakia’s position has been to push for energy security policies, while calling for a climate policy that takes into account the possibly-negative impact on competitiveness. Following the new momentum stemming from the Paris Agreement, the recent government change in Slovakia and the knowledge that it would need to deal with these dossiers, Slovakia has been making more positive statements about climate. It is clear however that their major policy priority in this area would remain energy rather than emissions reduction.

**Transport**

Slovakia is the largest car producer per capita in the world, so it is perhaps fitting that the European Commission be expected to present the Communication on Decarbonising Transport at the start of its Presidency.
Closely linked to this will be the above-mentioned Effort Sharing Decision, establishing the non-ETS sector targets, including within transport, in view of the 2030 EU climate and energy goals. These two initiatives will frame the important debate on transport decarbonisation, and the Presidency will have to prepare the respective Council positions.

In road transport, a fundamental dossier will be the Commission’s January proposal on the *reform of the type approval and market surveillance of motor vehicles Directive*. Here, the Presidency will likely work towards obtaining a general approach in Council before the end of the year. This is, however, a highly politicised file with diverging Member State positions on the market surveillance aspect, making its conclusion under Slovakia’s tenure problematic. Another important file is the *Reduction of pollutant emissions from road vehicles*, which has been on hold since November 2015 and could finally move forward under Slovakia’s Presidency.

Additionally, the *Parliamentary Inquiry Committee on emission measurements (EMIS)*, set up in response to the Volkswagen case, will present its report to plenary in September. It is expected to be further discussed in Council as Member States have voiced the need to close the existing loopholes surrounding the use of defeat devices in passenger cars. In addition, the EMIS report could also inform the work on the previously-mentioned files in this regard.

In aviation, the Presidency is expected to continue working on *revising the Aviation Safety Regulation aiming to improve safety standards* for growing air traffic as part of the EU Aviation Strategy. For the first time, the Regulation will also establish a legal framework for drones. The Slovak Presidency will aim at reaching a common position in Council and possibly launching trialogue negotiations with the Parliament. Another important area for the Presidency in this sector is that of preparing the mandates for the Commission to open aviation agreements with third countries.

In maritime and inland waterways, the Slovak Presidency will focus on two major files namely the highly-controversial proposed regulation for *liberalising port services* and the proposed *Directive on recognising professional qualifications in inland navigation*. The former is currently undergoing trialogue negotiations, and results are pending. It has been a divisive dossier in that its outcome could significantly affect ports’ competitiveness.

Moreover, although Slovakia is a landlocked nation with a limited interest in maritime affairs, there will be spotlight on Maritime Safety, due to a *Public Consultation on the European Commission’s REFIT package tackling the*...
International trade

Given the Commission’s exclusive competence in trade negotiations, trade policy is not among the Slovak Presidency’s principal priorities. Nevertheless, during its Presidency, Slovakia intends to support a balanced trade policy based on reciprocity and mutual benefit, with several important dossiers coming into play during its term.

Ratifying the recently-concluded EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) will certainly be high on the trade agenda. The Commission is due to adopt its proposal for the agreement on 5 July, after which Member States will have to sign the agreement. The Slovak Presidency will then be tasked with shepherding the agreement through Council, which will not be an easy task considering the rising level of public opposition to CETA in recent months. An EU-Canada Summit is scheduled for October.

Another key priority is the on-going negotiation for a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with the US. Here, progress has slowed down as a result of unprecedented public scrutiny, as well as fundamental differences of approaches between both parties. With presidential elections looming in the US this November, the pressure will be on for Slovakia to align Member States’ positions and achieve some form of political agreement on the text.

Although subject to relatively less public and media attention, the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement will also feature on the agenda with negotiators seeking a deal on the outstanding issues before the end of the year. The Slovak Presidency may therefore have a role in kicking off Council conclusions on the final agreement, which is among the European Commission’s top trade priorities.

The Commission is conducting a range of trade negotiations in parallel and may seek mandates to negotiate with other third countries, which is likely to keep the Slovak Presidency busy during its term. This includes re-launching the legislation within the Third Maritime Safety Package from July to October.

Slovakia also plans to evaluate the following dossiers: the Flag State Responsibilities and Accident Investigation Directive (to be jointly assessed), Vessel Traffic Monitoring and Information system and Reporting Formalities (to be jointly assessed) and Port State Control. However it can be expected for the Slovak Presidency to rely on its succeeding one, the Maltese, for support on the maritime files as the latter is likely to make these a priority.
EU-Mercosur trade negotiations, modernising the trade pillar of the EU-Mexico Global Agreement, kicking off negotiations with Australia and New Zealand, and potentially Indonesia, while following through on the negotiations with the Philippines and Malaysia, which should provide the building blocks for a future region-to-region agreement with ASEAN.

Another hot topic on the trade agenda will be that of China’s request for Market Economy Status under the WTO, which could weaken EU anti-dumping instruments at a critical time for the steel and aluminium sectors. At the same time, strategic concerns regarding the on-going EU-China Bilateral Investment Treaty negotiations, the new EU strategy on China, and China’s involvement in the Juncker Investment Plan, will make a clear-cut decision challenging to reach. The Commission is expected to present a proposal in July, which will be closely connected to discussions on modernising the EU’s trade defence instruments. An EU-China Summit may take place in July.

Considering its importance for Slovakia’s immediate security environment, ratifying the EU-Ukraine Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), signed in 2014 as part of the Association Agreement, will be critical. Following the rejection during a consultative referendum in the Netherlands
earlier this year, the Slovak Presidency may need to assist the Dutch in tackling this issue in a strategic manner, without alienating either the Ukraine or Dutch population. Whereas the Dutch are not expected to block the DCFTA’s ratification, it may seek a special arrangement for the Netherlands to take account of the referendum’s outcome.

Finally, as part of the migration deal with Turkey, the EU has agreed to grant Turkey visa-free status upon the implementation of a number of conditions. The stakes there are high (not least following the recent terrorist attack at Istanbul international airport) and strong balancing skills will be required to steer the dossier through Council and achieve a compromise on when and whether to grant Turkey this status.

Social policy and labour mobility

With regard to social policy and labour mobility, the Slovak Presidency will push the EU labour market’s reform with a focus on long-term unemployment, Member States’ investment in human capital, worker protection, digitisation and labour mobility.

In particular, the Presidency will begin working on reviewing the European Qualifications Framework alongside other initiatives within the Commission’s Agenda for New Skills and Jobs. Moreover, it is likely to conduct a first assessment of the Commission’s labour mobility package, should the EU Executive present it over the next six months.

Other priorities will include initiatives aiming at reconciling work and family life, tackling gender discrimination and fighting against poverty and social exclusion, with emphasis on promoting the social inclusion of Roma people.

In terms of current legislation, Slovakia will attempt to make progress at Council level with the revision of the 1996 Posting of Workers Directive. However, this could face some challenges given the strong opposition voiced by the Visegrad Group, of which Slovakia is a member, as well as the Baltic countries, Romania, Bulgaria and Cyprus. These Member States have formed a blocking minority in the Council thereby stalling the dossier.

The Slovak Presidency moreover aims to push forward on the EU-wide Accessibility Act, which lays down common accessibility requirements for products and services, and, linked to this, on the 2008 Equal Treatment Directive that is at a standstill in Council. The incoming Presidency will also attempt to advance discussions on the Commission’s proposal for protecting workers from
Healthcare

In line with the Trio Presidency programme, Slovakia plans to advance during its term the discussions on improving the health status of the European population. This is to be done by ensuring the availability of and access to innovative and affordable medicines for patients, preventing chronic non-communicable diseases, promoting healthy lifestyles, physical activity and a healthy diet, as well as highlighting EU cooperation and preparedness in addressing cross-border health threats, and continuing to address the issue of antimicrobial resistance.

On the access to medicines dossier, the Slovak Presidency is expected to focus on tabling a discussion on tackling medicine and parallel trade shortages, which are considered an important issue for patients in the region.

As outlined above, sustainable migration and asylum policy will be one of Slovakia’s priorities. Here, the Presidency will focus on improving the management of all aspects of migration, including irregular or illegal migration, the future of the asylum system as well as border protection, including the Smart Borders Package presented by the Commission last April. In this respect, particular emphasis will be placed on returning the Schengen Agreement to being fully operational, and strengthening its security aspects. This includes implementing the European Border and Coast Guard package which was agreed upon between Parliament and the Dutch Presidency.

**RELEVANT DATES:**

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<tr>
<td>20 September</td>
<td>Conference on prevention of chronic non-communicable diseases and healthy lifestyle</td>
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<td>3-4 October</td>
<td>Informal EPSCO Health Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>18-20 October</td>
<td>5th Annual Scientific Congress on zoonoses, foodborne and waterborne diseases – protection of public and animal health</td>
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<td>28-30 November</td>
<td>Meeting of the Heads of Medicines Agencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 December</td>
<td>EPSCO Health Council</td>
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Furthermore, the Presidency is also expected to prepare a unified EU position for the Conference of Parties (COP7) to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which will take place in India in November.

the risks related to exposure to carcinogens or mutagens at work, with future work to focus on exposure limit values and preventive measures.
If you would like any further information on these issues please do not hesitate to get in contact with us:

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You can visit the website of the Slovak Presidency of the Council at: [www.eu2016.sk](http://www.eu2016.sk)

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