



In Europe, we are facing challenges which demand from us prudent answers. Therefore it is even more important that the Member States upgrade our policies by mutual learning, good practices and past experiences. Our task is not only to protect rights, but also to improve them.

I believe that keeping high standards of labour legislation, an efficient social system, and encouraging social dialogue and dialogue with civil society, are an added value and a competitive advantage of the EU. The Member States have to ensure in our national measures that they are close to our citizens, that they understand them, know them. With all generations, it is necessary to promote the importance of lifelong learning and flexibility, as only like that we will cope with new requirements, brought to us by changes.

Let's give youth a possibility to enter the labour market as soon as possible. Let's ensure them quality employment, so that they will easier decide for family. Let's not be frightened by ageing of the population, but rather let it be incentive for responsible actions and planning.

During Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU we will together search for answers how Europe should invest in the future of its citizens: how to implement in practice the principles of flexicurity, how to improve the situation of youth, how to fight social exclusion, how to face new relations between generations and encourage solidarity among them, how to ensure equal opportunities for all.

Presentation of good practices from Member States is for all of us an important factor in exchanging positive results and experiences. It is a way how we can learn from each other. Because only together we can achieve better results and create better future for European society.

We know that Europe in the past had a lot of prudence and courage. I know that it will have them also now.

Marjeta Cotman
Minister of Labour, Family and Social Affairs



A EUROPE WHICH INVESTS IN PEOPLE AND WORKS FOR THE FUTURE

Today, one of the most important tasks of the European Union is to create conditions which provide a possibility and an opportunity for everyone to lead a dignified and quality life. Economic growth, new jobs and full employment as well as social cohesion are therefore priorities of the European Union which, in efforts to become more competitive while fulfilling its social responsibility and promoting sustainable development, confronts the challenges of the 21st century. Europe cannot develop unless it invests in people and their potentials, in systems and structures that (will) make Europe the greatest place to live and work. In doing so, it must build on its achievements and work for the future.

For this purpose, the Slovenian Presidency will focus in particular on further development of employment and social policies, on identifying measures to meet demographic challenges and ensuring gender equality and equal opportunities for all.

As regards legislative processes, the Slovenian Presidency will continue to simplify and modernize rules on the coordination of social security systems and endeavour to achieve the greatest possible progress in this field and the progress in other pending legislative proposals.



EMPLOYMENT

During its Presidency, Slovenia will devote much of its efforts to the topics covered by the Lisbon Strategy. Preparing for the new three-year cycle, we wish to ensure the continuity and stability of the revised Lisbon Strategy. However, it is necessary to take account of the demographic challenges and flexicurity principles and to increase the visibility of the social dimension. We believe that a balance must be struck between economic, employment and social dimension of the Lisbon Strategy to ensure the sustainable achievement of the Lisbon objectives.

Within this context, the Presidency will go on with the debate on flexicurity. Above all, we wish to focus on the implementation of common principles of flexicurity at national level. In this respect, special attention will be placed on the position of young and elderly workers in the labour market and on the role of social partners and other actors in the process of shaping and implementing the flexicurity policies. Thus, one of the key tasks of the Member States in the following period will be to develop efficient flexicurity arrangements at national levels.

According to the Slovenian Presidency, Europe must invest in its future, therefore, we intend to pay particular attention to young people and their place in society. We wish to enhance the discussion on the promotion of the youth employment because young people, seen as the driving force of society, today face serious challenges in entering the labour market. Undoubtedly, young people are the most flexible group within the workforce; nevertheless, measures to ensure their safety and stability are required. We should join our efforts to identify measures and ways to decrease the unemployment among young people and to ensure their security and stability, and last but not least, make their decision in favour of family and reconciliation of professional, family and private life easier.



SOCIAL AFFAIRS

The new social realities of Europe result from profound changes in European societies and call for comprehensive responses at the European, national, regional and local levels. Presumably, a clearer picture of the situation will emerge from the Social Reality Stocktaking, to be concluded by the Commission in spring 2008. Dealing with social challenges will require further modernisation of the systems and structures at local, regional and national levels and will have to be reflected in the modernized Social Agenda 2005-2010 which is expected by the mid 2008.

The fight against poverty, namely the poverty of children and youth, and the fight against social exclusion are key responses to current social challenges and the topics to be given major attention during the Slovenian Presidency. Further steps towards achieving the EU objective are required in order to significantly reduce poverty and social exclusion by 2010. The priority tasks of the Slovenian Presidency will include the preparation of a new cycle of the open method of coordination in the areas of social protection and social inclusion as well as further reinforcement of positive interactions between the Lisbon Agenda and common social objectives of the Member States.

Special attention will be paid to inclusion and participation of people facing poverty and of those most distant from the labour market as well as to developing active inclusion strategies. Within these efforts, the modernisation of social services of general interest leading to improved accessibility and quality is one of the important building blocks. The Slovenian Presidency believes that efforts must be made to establish a harmonised European framework for social services that would consider and respect national traditions.



DEMOGRAPHY

Slovenian presidency will continue the European discussion on demographic challenges, because achievement of Lisbon objectives to a great extent depends on how they are managed. We believe that society can successfully face challenges of the 21st century only with mutual symbiosis and respect of all generations. We will therefore devote special attention to new relationships between generations and to development of new forms of solidarity. We will also deal with long-term care as one of the more important aspects of intergenerational solidarity and cooperation, and at that focus on improving quality and on accessibility of long-term care.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Creating conditions, which provide equal opportunities for all, is our common goal. Slovenian Presidency will endeavour to ensure durability of results of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, which marked year 2007.

We will follow the commitment of the Trio, that activities for ensuring equal opportunities and preventing discrimination of people with disabilities have to be even strengthened. To that end, we will devote special attention to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. As the state holding the Presidency, we will encourage the European Union and Member States, with various activities, to as soon as possible ratify the Convention and the Optional Protocol, and implement the provisions in the national regulations and policies or practice. Further, the Presidency will pursue improving possibilities for employment and social inclusion of people with disabilities within the framework of the Lisbon strategy and open methods of coordination for social protection and social inclusion.



GENDER EQUALITY

In the area of gender equality, Slovenian Presidency will follow the objectives and priority tasks of the European Pact for Gender Equality, the Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men (2006-2010) and the Lisbon Strategy. Slovenian Presidency will continue with implementation of the commitments from the Trio Presidency Declarations (Germany, Portugal, Slovenia) "Towards Gender Equality in the European Union"

Special emphasis will be given to elimination of gender stereotypes in society, participation and empowerment of women in society and Slovenian Presidency will continue the process of monitoring implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, within the context of which we will develop indicators on the girl child and prepare a report on women in political decision-making processes.

An emphasis of Slovenian Presidency will also be on gender mainstreaming in all relevant political processes and areas.



Informal Meeting of Ministers for Gender Equality, and Ministerial Conference on Gender Equality

Brdo pri Kranju, 29–31 January 2008

Gender stereotypes are one of the most persistent root causes of for inequality between women and men in all areas of life and in all life periods. The Conference Elimination of Gender Stereotypes: Mission (Im)Possible? will address possible ways to eliminate traditional gender roles and gender stereotypes, especially in the areas of education, training, labour market, culture and media. The Conference is supported by the European Commission.

The Conference will be followed by the Informal Meeting of Ministers for Gender Equality, which is the most important event in the area of gender equality during the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU. Ministers will discuss participation and empowerment of women in society. This topic will be the framework for addressing issues of the balanced participation of women and men in political decision-making, the empowerment of girls in order to achieve gender equality, and the importance of gender equality policies in development cooperation.

Informal Meeting of Ministers for Employment and Social Affairs

Brdo pri Kranju, 31 January–2 February 2008

Seeking balance between security and flexibility is a lengthy process which requires active involvement of all partners. On European level, important steps were made in the past years, which will be of support and help to the countries in forming their national regulations. Invaluable is the contribution of previous Presidencies, including the adoption of common principles of flexicurity.

Slovenian Presidency wishes to ensure continuation of the process and therefore encourage deepening of discussion about flexicurity, especially in relation to implementation of common principles of flexicurity and coordination of social policies and employment policies. In so doing, the Presidency will dedicate special attention to youth and older workers, and to the challenges which are faced by women on the labour market.



Conference: Jobs for youth – prosperity for all

Brdo pri Kranju, 23–25 April 2008

Despite the fact that youth with their energy and impetus represent the driving force of society, they are today faced with especially big challenges when entering the labour market. Definitely youth represents the most adaptable category of active population, but they also require measures which ensure their security and stability. Above all, we have to provide youth with a possibility for easier and efficient transition from educational system to labour market. Further, we must offer youth already with the first employment the level of security which will enable them easier decision for family life. Main emphasis of the conference will be the area of employment of youth, namely the key topics will be: youth and atypical employments, youth and mobility, linking labour market and education, and balancing of professional and family life.

Conference on Demography – Intergenerational Solidarity and Long Term Care

Brdo pri Kranju, 27–29 April 2008

Due to demographic changes, societies are facing a new relation and new relationships between generations. The Conference on intergenerational solidarity and cooperation will be comprised of two parts. In the first part, we will try to redefine the concept of solidarity in connection to seeking new forms of intergenerational symbiosis and cooperation, while in the second part we will address long-term care as one of concrete examples of intergenerational solidarity and cooperation.



7th European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty

Brussels, 16–17 May 2008

The basic purpose of the meeting is to hear the people who are experiencing poverty, and to establish a dialogue with those who are forming policies for reduction of poverty and social exclusion on the level of European Union and on national levels. It is also about stimulating to activity and including marginal groups into the processes of seeking solutions and forming strategies and measures for improving their position.

Conference: The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – from words to reality?

Kranjska gora, 22–23 May 2008

The Disability Presidency Conference and subsequent informal ministerial meeting of ministers, responsible for disability issues, are being planned on the topic of the policy implementation of UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Slovenian Presidency Conference will be focused on further progress in implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in EU Member States. Presidency conference will be focused on advancing the European Union policy addressing responsibilities of Member States and European Union, in general and on some specific areas related to the UN Convention: living in the community, employment, accessibility in broader sense- built environment, transport, information and communication, media.



COUNCIL MEETINGS

February

29 February 2008, Brussels

The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO)

June

9 – 10 June 2008, Luxembourg

The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO)

INFORMAL MEETINGS OF MINISTERS

January

30 – 31 January 2008, Brdo pri Kranju

Informal Meeting of Ministers for Gender Equality

(in collaboration with the Office for Equal Opportunities)

February

31 January – 2 February 2008, Brdo pri Kranju

Informal Meeting of Ministers for Employment and Social Affairs



CONFERENCES

January

29 – 30 January 2008, Brdo pri Kranju

Elimination of Gender Stereotypes: Mission (Im)Possible?
(in collaboration with the Office for Equal Opportunities)

April

23 – 25 April 2008, Brdo pri Kranju

Jobs for youth - prosperity for all

27 – 29 April 2008, Brdo pri Kranju

Conference on Demography - Intergenerational solidarity and Long Term Care

May

16 – 17 May 2008, Bruselj

7th European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty
(in collaboration with European Anti Poverty Network – EAPN)

22 - 23 May 2008, Kranjska gora

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – from words to reality?



TECHNICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL MEETINGS

March

9 – 11 March 2008, Brdo pri Kranju
Senior Labour Inspectors Committee Meeting (SLIC Meeting)

17 – 19 March 2008, Brdo pri Kranju
Informal Meeting of Employment Committee (EMCO)

25 – 26 March 2008, Brdo pri Kranju
Meeting of the Intergovernmental Group "L'Europe de l'Enfance"

April

29 – 30 April 2008, Brdo pri Kranju
Informal Meeting of Social Protection Committee (SPC)

May

14 – 16 May 2008, Brdo pri Kranju
Meeting of Correspondents of the Mutual Information System on Employment (MISEP)

20 – 22 May 2008, Brdo pri Kranju
Meeting of the Correspondents of the Mutual Information System on Social Protection (MISSOC)

24 – 25 May 2008, Ljubljana
European Disability Forum - Annual General Assembly

June

12 June 2008, Geneva
Informal ministerial meeting during the international labour conference on the topic of decent employment of youth (in collaboration with International Labour Organisation)

5 – 6 June 2008, Portorož
EURES Working Party (in collaboration with the Employment Service of Slovenia)

19 – 20 June 2008, Maribor
Meeting of Heads of Public Employment Services and EURES High Level Strategy Group (in collaboration with the Employment Service of Slovenia)